
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
a guide to good practice.
UNITED

Good Practice in Community Development

The
Community Foundation
for Northern Ireland

supporting people, strengthening communities, building peace

Website: www.communityfoundationni.org Email: info@communityfoundationni.org

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The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Community House
Citylink Business Park
Albert Street
Belfast BT12 4HQ
Tel: 028 9024 5927
Fax: 028 9032 9839

Units 4B Rath Mor Centre
Bligh's Lane
Derry City BT48 0LZ
Co. Londonderry
Tel: 028 7137 1547
Fax: 028 7137 1565

Produced by The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Design: Doghouse Creative
Illustrations: Kevin McAleenan

Website: www.communityfoundationni.org **Email: info@communityfoundationni.org**

INTRODUCTION

Since being founded as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust in 1979, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has produced several guides and handbooks on community development.

This good practice guide represents what we believe is one of the most useful. Initially published in the late 1990's, as the result of a substantial body of joint work between some of our most experienced staff and a range of experienced community activists from across Northern Ireland, the publication captures what is regarded as good practice, describing community development processes which have worked in local communities and meet the principles of active citizenship, equity and empowerment.

These are the concepts that the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is committed to. Since the original publication, the material has been updated by drawing on the additional expertise of new members of Community Foundation staff and the direct experience of implementing two programmes of neighbourhood-based work in areas of weak community infrastructure (the Belfast and Regional Community Demonstration Programme and the current Communities in Transition Programmes).

Some sections are the work of individual staff, writing from their own experience, supplemented by invaluable additions from a range of community practitioners. For this reason, sections may differ somewhat in style and format; they are, however, based on experiential learning, things that have been tried and tested and proved successful, joined by the goal of describing a process that is replicable to communities across Northern Ireland.

In the Spirit of Community Development

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland's approach when working with local groups and in the development and funding of projects focuses on the themes of democracy, equity and empowerment. These principles are the cornerstones of all good community development practice:

- Democratic - in the sense of collective action which is cooperative and representative of all the people living in a community and which promotes active citizenship.

- Equitable - in the sense of actively involving those people and groups within the community that have been the most marginalised, disadvantaged and excluded from decision-making; and

- Empowering - in the sense of creating structures and processes that encourage people within a local community to 'own' both the solutions to their problems and the means to achieve their dreams.

The Community Foundation believes that the community development approach and process can benefit any, and all, communities irrespective of their particular identity or traditions, and that community development approaches have relevance for groups working with and/or within community settings - e.g. women's groups; community arts groups, etc.

The purpose of this publication is to go beyond theory and look directly at a range of issues as they affect local community activists, groups or workers. Its primary aim is as a guide for newly formed groups and it has been written to make it as easy as possible to use for those who are new to the community development arena. Some information contained within may also be of use to groups with more experience, particularly during planning and review periods.

For those new to community development, it is probably best to acknowledge at this stage that the experience will be rewarding, motivating and frustrating at the same time; if you speak to anyone with community development experience there is no doubt their words will reflect this. The best advice to be offered is that preparation is the key -- get properly organised, think things through, put structures and planning into your work and it is more likely that you, as an individual, and your group will achieve the success you are aiming for.

We hope this publication finds favour within the field of community development, while challenging ideas in some areas of existing practice. It would not be a community development publication if part of its remit were not to ‘raise a bit of dust’.

CONTENTS

Section 1: Getting Started

Community Development Values & Principles

'Community' generally refers to two things:

- A distinct geographic area or neighbourhood and/or
- A group of people who share similar identifies, difficulties, issues - for example women, children, young people, elderly, people with disabilities etc (often referred to as a Community of Interest).

'Community Development' refers to the empowerment of people to have greater influence and control over the things that affect them.

Core values and principles should be at the heart of all community development. Generally these should include:

- **Social Justice & Equality:** Supporting communities and individuals to uphold and value the rights of all people and to tackle oppression, deprivation and exclusion
- **Collaboration & Learning Together:** Supporting individuals and groups to work together to identify a shared vision - to identify and address common, shared concerns. Sharing and using the expertise, skills, capacity, knowledge and diversity within a community to bring about positive change
- **Participation:** Creating an environment which ensures that everyone can be heard and participate, regardless of their background, ability, politics, religion, disability etc.
- **Empowerment:** Developing the confidence and the capacity of individuals and groups to identify and address the issues which negatively impact on their lives and the lives of those they represent
- **Quality & Best Practice:** Striving continuously to improve the quality and the manner in which things are done by and on behalf of communities
- **Effectively Targeting Need:** Ensuring that the needs of communities are accurately identified and presented; ensuring that the causes of need are effectively understood and considered; and ensuring that actions to address need are appropriate and can be realistically met.

The Benefits of Community Development

Collective 'community' activity can:

- Help to unify people around similar issues of interest e.g. the need for increased social and recreational activities, for training and education, for resources/infrastructure
- Place pressure on agencies to ensure that their services are enhanced/appropriately provided;
- Act as a mechanism to enable programmes, projects, funding/investment, new information and ideas to be brought into the community from outside;
- Help new groups to form in the community around special interest areas such as disability, health, education, employment;
- Tackle sectarianism, racism or homophobia
- Support local people to create a new vision of their community, to protect the things that local people value and empower the community to mobilise and act to achieve change
- Enable local communities to lobby for positive change and network with other communities - strength in collective action.

Getting involved in community action not only benefits local communities, but also the individuals who participate in a number of ways:

- Empowerment – feeling that you are doing something positive that can bring about change;
- Confidence – realising that you have the ability to deal with complex

issues and a wide range of people;
- Skills – uncovering or developing skills that you didn't realise you had, such as communication, organisation, leadership etc;
- Reducing isolation – realising that others are experiencing similar things to you, your family, your friends or your neighbours;
- Respect for diversity – talking to a wide range of people, sharing views, understanding where people are coming from and vice versa;
- Awareness – becoming more aware of how issues affect people's lives, local politics, how government works etc.

Whatever motivation exists for collective action, it is most effective when it builds on and maintains the active involvement of members of the 'community' it aims to represent. It also must be 'accountable' to that community - keep them informed and supportive.

Starting a Community Group

The motivation to work with other people in a community group usually comes from a desire to make things better for a community. An individual can make representation on his/her own behalf but when people come together as a group to discuss needs and agree action, they are more effective in achieving lasting change.

The reason for setting up a community group may originate from the need to do something to address, for example, poor quality housing, unemployment, poor health, a lack of facilities for the elderly or young people. Indeed, many reasons exist which motivate people to come together to address issues in a more structured and formal way.

At an early stage, set aside time for your group to discuss and make decisions about core aims (e.g. to improve the quality of life in the community) and the objectives of the group – day-to-day work that will help to achieve central aims.

Representation - What Does it Mean?

One of the key elements of the development of any group is that it should be representative of the community it aims to act on behalf of. Actively encouraging this representation helps ensure that plans of action take account of how issues are actually impacting on people's lives and help to create a greater level of problem solving about how the issue/s can and should be addressed.

It is not always a good idea to begin a group by seeking representation or membership from traditional 'leaders' such as the clergy, councillors, politicians, local doctors, heads of schools etc. In Northern Ireland, groups which include representation from a specific political party or church can be viewed as representing a particular section of the community and this can often create divisions and difficulties, not least that membership can become restricted to those with a certain religious or political view. It can also result in the group experiencing difficulty in working with neighbouring communities or other community-based groups because the group can be viewed as having a negative perception towards other political or religious affiliations.

There may also be the added risk that these representatives will be given an unequal degree of respect and authority within the group simply because they are viewed as being more experienced and/or have established leadership roles within the community. There may, of course, be exceptions to this, dependent partly on the nature of the work of the community group, the personality of the representatives in question and how they are perceived. There is no doubt that it is useful to have the support of such people as the group develops because their experience and skills can help in developing a plan of action, the best approach in addressing an issue or developing relationships with those individuals or agencies your group is keen to influence.

It is, however, vitally important that a group makes efforts to include a broad range of people not just the 'great and the good' or the self appointed leaders. Make sure your group has made (and constantly tries to ensure) that minority groups or the more silent voices are included in the group. This will build broader support for what you are doing.

The venue/location in which a group meets can also influence its representativeness. It is important that the venue/location should be somewhere that does not restrict the attendance of existing or potential representatives; therefore, being easily accessible and 'safe' are important considerations when selecting where you'll meet. Some venues may not be suitable if your group wants to draw representation from a diverse range of local people and in these circumstances it may be necessary to host the meeting in a location that is not considered as being specific to one section of the community.

If at all possible avoid meeting in someone's home. This can be 'excluding' as well as putting undue pressure or power on the person hosting the meeting.

During the early stages of development it is important that the group feels they can achieve change. This helps to inspire the individuals involved because it demonstrates that working together gets results. It can also help to gain local support for your work because the group is viewed as delivering on the things they set out to do. New membership or representation may be one outcome of this because your achievement may motivate other people to volunteer their help. With this in mind it's really useful to think of a variety of things that can be achieved in the short term without too much effort; this will not only help to create an atmosphere of excitement that something new and positive is happening early on, it may also earn the group increased credibility and support within the community. Any such short-term 'wins' should be celebrated.

It's important that your group regularly communicates with the people it is acting on behalf of (its beneficiaries) and with those you wish to influence (those who have a role in bringing about the change your group requires). One way of achieving this is to produce a simple newsletter and use it to explain why the group was set up, what it wants to achieve and who its members are. This can be reproduced on a regular basis to keep people informed of the progress you are making. It should not be too ambitious or too expensive so that its regular production does not become burdensome nor its cost prohibitive. If your group represents a specific neighbourhood/area then articles about local history and printing old photos of the area and its people will increase its popularity and readership. The newsletter can be used to invite views and comments about your work and the needs of the beneficiaries you are working on behalf of; it can also be used to invite participation in events you may be hosting such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs), training days, arts and crafts projects and the launch of new programmes.

It is crucial that you do not become complacement as a group and assume that your community knows what you are doing and is behind you. Always find ways to consult and take feedback from the community (in its broadest sense) to ensure the group stays relevant to and accountable for the changes it hopes to bring to the area. A common critisism of community groups is that they get complacent about sharing information with their community and begin to work on a narrow agenda.

Section 2: Forming a Committee

Representation

In all cases it is important that those represented feel a sense of ownership of the organisation; that they feel welcome to participate; that mechanisms exist to ensure they can participate; and that they are fully represented in the make-up of the governing structure, be it a committee or a board of directors, or other. Have you considered the balance of gender, age, disability, race, religion, politics and socio-economic background.

Sometimes it may be necessary to go out and seek more adequate community representation. Leaving spaces open on the committee for co-option is often a good way of ensuring that others not represented can later be brought on board. It also leaves your group with the flexibility to co-opt people with certain expertise, as and when you require them, to assist with the achievement of certain aspects of your work. Don't be afraid to ask people with expertise to help you out - their input is often invaluable.

Size

This depends very much on how exclusive or inclusive you want to be, and how many people or groups you are trying to serve. For practical reasons, however, ten to twelve members seems to be a common size that allows reasonable representation and enables business to be conducted with limited chaos; although many groups have six to eight dedicated members and are able to run their projects and group effectively and efficiently. Very large committies tend to find it difficult to get consensus - based decisions. However, no one wants to turn away volunteers - find a way to engage people in sub-committies or working groups rather than turning away offers of help.

Roles

Committees are made up of a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson, a Secretary and Assistant Secretary, and a Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. Some groups may also wish to appoint a Public Relations Officer (PRO).

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that there is order at meetings, that agendas are adhered to and that everyone gets to contribute their piece. S/he will be the person who signs the accepted minutes of previous meetings as accurately reflecting the discussion and the agreed actions. In the case of a tie in voting, the chair may have a second or 'casting' vote if the organisation has agreed such powers in its constitution. In carrying out these tasks the chairperson is entrusted with responsibility for leading the group. Their leadership should encourage participation across the group in decision-making and should acknowledge the roles of others. The chairperson needs to develop an overview of the committee and its objectives so that s/he can facilitate good decision-making and identify and address conflict within the group. Being an effective chairperson requires good listening skills as well as the ability to allow all members to air their views while adhering to the agenda and having the business of the meeting completed within the agreed timeframe. Beyond these roles, the chairperson shares the same powers as any member of the committee or board such as those granted to him/her from time to time by the other members i.e. to represent them at events etc. The vice-chairperson assumes the role of the chairperson in his/her absence.

The Secretary is the person who acts as the organisation's signature on official documents and letters, unless otherwise agreed. (For example, this role is often handed over to staff members in the day-to-day business of smaller organisations). The secretary is responsible for keeping the minutes of meetings, having them typed and circulated to members and giving members adequate notice of meetings. Very often committees now do this by email but it is important to ensure that this method of communication suits all members - not everyone has access to broadband and this can exclude many members of the community. The secretary should plan the agenda with the chairperson in preparation for each meeting. The secretary also has the task of dealing with correspondence - ensuring that relevant correspondence is brought to the committee's attention and that the committee responds. Usually the secretary takes responsibility for filing or holding on to letters, forms and documents that need to be kept in a safe place. The assistant secretary assumes the secretary's position in his/her absence.

The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing all the group's financial arrangements, for ensuring that proper accounts and records are kept and for presenting regular financial statements to the committee. Within a committee the treasurer generally takes the lead in overseeing the set up of appropriate systems and procedures regarding financial records, payments, cheques and keeping the accounts. S/he also takes responsibility for regularly reviewing the financial health of the group and highlighting, in good time, any financial management issues or discrepancies. The treasurer will normally be a signatory to cheques paid in the organisation's name and will present the group’s (audited) accounts at Annual General Meetings (AGMs). However, it should be remembered that handling money is a ‘committee responsibility’ and the treasurer should never be left to manage money alone.

The Public Relations Officer is the person who presents the public face of the organisation, arranging press coverage and publicity, and selling the goals of the group to the wider community. It is, however, important that they accurately reflect the views of the group and therefore all public statements, regardless of how they are made, should be discussed and pre-agreed by the full committee. The PRO should have a very close working relationship with the chairperson.

Committee Members: There are two keys things to think about when individuals take up roles within a committee. Firstly, they need to be clear about their role so that they can operate effectively and within their specific remit. Secondly, they need to be appropriately supported by the other committee members to effectively carry out their functions; for example, there is no point in the chairperson being responsible for calling a meeting to order if everyone pays little attention to what s/he has said, blatantly carrying on with discussions that are not relevant to the purpose of the meeting.

Good community development practice would recommend that committee officers should change regularly. Many organisations will have an inbuilt rule that committee members must resign after a given term in office (two or three years) to ensure that the group doesn't stagnate or become dominated by those members with specific roles and responsibilities. This is often done on a rotational basis, with two or three members stepping down each year and being replaced by other members of the committee. It can also be useful to consider whether committee members can 'shadow' one or other of the committee officer's posts in order to build knowledge, skills and confidence.

Power

How power is handled can make or break an organisation. One or more individuals within a committee can take power - usually where the stronger members tend to dominate those group members who are less assertive, either individually or as part of cliques. Those who are less dominant can be overtly or covertly forced out of the group. This type of situation is, of course, unlikely to lead to harmonious relationships. The group will no longer be inclusive and this situation could very likely cause a splintering within the community it is supposed to represent. It may also result in the hijacking of the original ideal or direction of the group for some other end.

We carry power with us from many spheres of life. For example, the parish priest or vicar or the local bank manager may bring an influence that is not equal to their position in the group or their relevant capacity, knowledge or expertise. Equally this situation may arise with regards to individuals with perceived political or paramilitary links. It is important that group members with previous standing in the community are aware of this and that they do not abuse their positions within the group. Situations when members over-exert their power and influence can be difficult for the group to deal with. It is therefore important that prior thought is given to how these situations will be handled and an agreed, structured procedure or method of handling these situations adopted. Rotating roles and responsibilities on a regular basis within the management committee is one way to provide protection against this.

Abusing your position or over-exerting your influence can take many guises: not passing on messages, editing the minutes of meetings to suit a particular viewpoint; not giving enough notice for meetings so that certain members find it difficult to attend; setting up powerful sub-groups to subvert the parent organisation etc. If individual group members adopt this behaviour, they need to seriously question and consider their reasons for participation and whether or not they should continue to participate in the group if this is how they are driven.

Decision Making

How decisions are made is crucially important. There are two mains ways for decisions to be agreed upon:

- Standard majority rule, when the chairperson asks for an indication of support from the whole group regarding a particular decision. This process can be frustrating for those who hold the minority view so it is important that full discussion takes place beforehand and that all views are given equal consideration before a decision is actually reached

- Consistent consensus, when the full agreement of each member is sought at each stage in the process. While this ensures that conflict is avoided around decision-making, it is lengthy and time consuming and there is a risk that actions may grind to a halt because a consensus decision cannot be achieved.

It is usually best to try to reach decisions through consensus rather than by majority vote. Deciding by majority vote can be divisive and, for the most part, should only be used when a decision by consensus cannot be achieved. If a consensus decision cannot be achieved, it may be best to delay the decision to give members time to further consider the situation or to try to reach a compromise rather than divide a group. Neither is it advisable for a group to make a decision purely on the basis that one member makes a proposal and another seconds the proposal. The chairperson needs to ensure that each proposal has had adequate discussion by all members before a decision is reached.

An effective way of creating the right working relationship across the committee is to develop a code of conduct (a sample code of conduct can be viewed at Appendix 3). The code should list the expected behaviour of all committee members when acting on behalf of the group. It can include what is expected around confidentiality, dealing with conflict and conflicts of interest, conduct at meetings, and the level of professionalism required from each member of the group. The key thing about developing the code of conduct is the involvement of the entire group in identifying and agreeing its content. It is much more likely that members will buy in and adhere to its content if they have been central to agreeing what's in it. The chairperson can then use the code to identify and deal with unacceptable or unprofessional committee behaviour. However, the chairperson will require the support of the full group in order to deal with situations when the code of conduct has been breached. It is also prudent that the group regularly reviews and updates the content of the code; this process acts as a good reminder to all committee members of what is expected and keeps the document fresh and up to date.

Getting the Best out of Meetings

There is nothing so off-putting as a poorly organised meeting where people feel that their views are neither heard nor valued and that the outcome of the meeting is unclear or confusing. People give up their own time to attend a group meeting and this should be valued. There are a number of very simple rules to remember in getting the best out of meetings:

- Try to create an atmosphere that will encourage those who are attending the meeting to participate. Sitting formally around a table helps to create an atmosphere in which business can be discussed and dealt with;

- Having an agenda which details each topic of discussion is crucial – it supports the chairperson's efforts in keeping the discussion centred on business and creates a focus to the meeting that is easy for all members to adhere to;

- The chairperson must ensure there is impartiality and fairness during meetings. S/he should ensure that all points of view expressed are considered impartially by the entire group, whatever s/he or individual group members might think about them personally;

- During the course of the meeting it can be useful if the chairperson offers a summary of the discussion so that everyone is clear about the points people are making and the decisions and actions that have been agreed. The secretary should note these key decisions in the minutes. **Decisions on expenditure should always be minuted.**

Keep to the agreed time; people may either drift away or feel resentful if a meeting goes on beyond the agreed time. It may also be found that it can be valuable to break the meeting up into smaller groups for a more detailed discussion of more complex issues. Each sub-group can report back a summary of their discussions and their recommended decisions at the next meeting. The benefits of smaller sub-groups can include helping people to relax and contribute to discussion; limiting the dominance of over-confident individuals; stimulating creative thinking, encouraging a variety of ideas; examining issues in more detail and saving time.

It is also important to consider how to end a meeting so that people are clear about the outcomes. The chairperson could ask some of the following questions-

- What have we achieved tonight?
- What have you found helpful about the meeting?
- What has been unhelpful or off-putting about the meeting?
- What improvements could we make in the way we run future meetings?
- Is everyone clear about what decisions have been taken at the meeting and what still remains to be decided?
- Who will take action in relation to what decisions?

- Are arrangements for writing and circulating the record of the meeting (the minutes) in order?
- What are arrangements for future meetings? (Date/time/when will notifications be circulated?)

A record of the meeting should be written up and circulated quickly so that people are reminded about what action they have agreed to take so that they have time to carry out work before the next meeting. This will assist them to read the minutes while the meeting is fresh in their minds and they can therefore make sure the minutes are an accurate representation of the discussion/decision that took place. It is good practice to include the date of the next meeting in the minutes so that those who were unable to attend will have the follow on date. It is good practice for the chairperson to begin each meeting by taking the committee through the minutes of the previous meeting to check for any inaccuracies or discrepancies so that necessary amendments can be made and accurate records of discussions and decisions kept.

Section 3: The Constitution

Why do we need a Constitution?

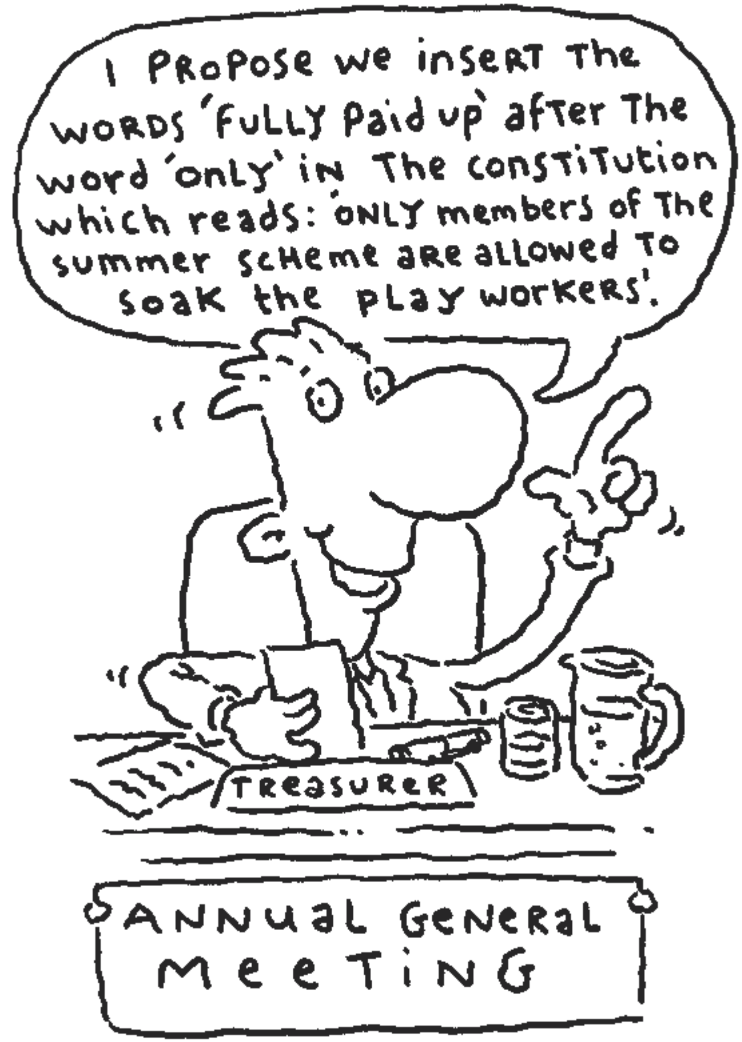
The constitution is a written document that details the way an organisation is meant to behave. It outlines what you're about and governs the way in which your group is meant to conduct its business. It is the organisation's governing document and therefore it is important for all those involved in the group to fully understand its content and its implications.

What type of Constitution best suits your needs?

The answer to this relies very much on what you wish to achieve. There are a number of ways in which an organisation may constitute itself: as an Association, as a Trust, as a Company limited by Guarantee, and as a Co-op (a Mutual or Friendly Society). The main differences between these types of organisations is the amount of red tape and bureaucracy involved, but is dictated by the amount of protection required by members in the event of financial or other difficulties.

Groups may also decide that they want their work recognised as being charitable, that they want to be publicly recognised as being a charitable, voluntary organisation. This process involves becoming registered with the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland and adhering to the regulations contained in the Charities Act 2008. Any of the types of constituted organisations listed above can apply for charitable status.

There is a distinct advantage in becoming a charity. Many major trust funds and grant providers will only fund registered charitable organisations, so if you want to seek funding it may be something your group will have to do. There are, however, limits on the activities in which charities can become involved; for instance, political activity is not charitable, and lobbying has caused major problems for charities, some resulting in lengthy court cases. As the Charities Act 2008 embeds it will require all groups who intend to apply for public funding to register as a charity.



Forming an Association

Most community and voluntary groups start off as associations because it is a relatively simple structure, and requires a group of individuals to agree a joint course of action. Unless an association secures charitable status, it is relatively free to become involved in any activity, including political and lobbying work. Committee members are, however, personally liable for debt and other claims against the organisation. An association's constitution will outline aims and objectives, rules of membership, rules of business and dissolution. The sample constitution (see Appendix 2) may be used as a basis for identifying and compiling some of the elements that might suit your organisation should you choose this structure.

Your group may decide to opt for a Trust structure. One key difference in setting up a trust is that liability for debt is no longer the responsibility of the members of the association but the personal responsibility of named trustees. Trustees have a clear interest in the activities of the organisation and would have an understandable desire to influence the direction of the organisation.

The group may wish to become a Company Limited by Guarantee. This structure protects its members or committee from liability from debts and charges incurred by the company, provided they have not acted negligently.

The establishment of a company is a legal process and may require the assistance of a solicitor, although many community support agencies will provide assistance to enable your group to register (which usually takes 6-8 weeks). Groups often decide to become a Company if they own assets (e.g. property) or want to start a small business wing. It brings with it a duty to disclose the financial affairs of the organisation to the community and to Companies Registry (see back page for contact details).

Remember, there is no way of avoiding liability for debt incurred as a result of negligence or fraud. If you are a committee member and you do not understand your organisation's accounts, then ask your treasurer for an explanation. Audited accounts are not always necessary and your group should decide about this on the basis of the scale of the money they are dealing with: the larger the amount, the safer it is to have accounts audited annually. Many funding bodies require audited accounts, but many local auditors or accountants can provide a reasonably priced service for community groups – get prices before committing your group.

For organisations developing activities in the area of the social economy the most appropriate structure may be a Co-Op (a Mutual or Friendly Society). In this case, its members run the organisation democratically, with everyone able to have a say in decision-making. There are many examples of industrial and commercial co-operatives in existence, but fewer examples of community organisations run on those principles. Often the community development principles of democracy, equity and empowerment mean that an Association or Company will operate in an open and inclusive way without needing the structure of a Co-Op. If you are interested in developing along these lines you should contact the Social Economy Network (see List of Contacts: Appendix 4).

It is recommended that the group seeks the guidance of someone with expertise in legally setting up an organisation and developing governing documents. The good news is that there is plenty of easily accessible guidance and expertise to assist your group in developing the most appropriate governing documents etc. Organisations such as Community Change and NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) have guidance notes relating to constitutions and setting up a company which can be downloaded from their website www.nicva.org and www.community-change.org.

Section 4: Understanding & Targeting Community Needs

It is crucial that community-based groups have a full understanding of the specific needs of those they are representing or advocating on behalf of. There's no doubt that the experience of individual group members is important, but when action or work is being planned it is essential that your group is confident you have gathered as much information and knowledge as possible about what needs exist and how best they could and should be addressed.

Discussion & Consultation

There are a number of ways in which this can be carried out. Firstly, speaking to as many people as possible within your target or beneficiary group is a good idea. You could bring people together to talk to them about the issue and its impact and how best they feel the issues or problems could be addressed. If you decide this is a good way to get information then you may need to think about arranging a number of events at different times so that as many people as possible can participate; people may have commitments or responsibilities which take up a lot of their time, for instance those in education, those with children, those who care for a family member or those who work.

Community Survey or Audit

Conducting an audit or survey is a structured way in which information relating to needs can be obtained. A community audit can help you gather facts and figures directly from your beneficiaries. It can also be used as a means of raising the profile of your group because it provides an excellent opportunity for direct communication between your group and those you are acting on behalf of. It's essential that your entire group is involved in designing the audit/survey and reviewing the information gathered. Careful preparation is required when considering the types of questions the survey/audit will contain as well as how these questions should be structured.

Your group will want to ensure that as many of your desired beneficiaries as possible have had the opportunity to complete the survey or audit questionnaire. This way the results will be much more accurate and reflective of the issue or need. By actively involving all group members in developing and conducting the audit, a greater level of consistency about how and what information is being gathered can be gained because members will fully understand the purpose of the audit/survey and how the information gathered is going to be used. With this in mind, the following are some suggestions about good practice in carrying out a community audit.

The group needs to spend some time discussing the benefits of conducting the audit: Why do you want to do it? – what do you expect from it? – and what will you do with the information you get?

Having decided to do an audit, the group will then need to work out how many people they will target. There are a few ways of doing this. You could agree that it is important to go to a high percentage of households of your target or beneficiary group and ask them to complete the questionnaire. This will be time consuming and can be costly, especially if the target group is large in size, so it will require careful consideration before you decide this is the right course of action for your group. Your group may decide to select a 'sample' of your target or beneficiary group. This will also require careful consideration because you may want to ensure you get as big a cross section of opinion from your target group as you can; you may need to talk to a variety of people, different genders, ages, backgrounds etc, so identifying the parents of children in a school may not be the best means of achieving this because it's likely that most will be of a particular age range.

The group will need to think about what kinds of questions the survey will contain. It's usually a good idea to link this directly to the type of information you need, for instance if the focus of your work is on the environment, then having questions in the audit about the type of television programmes people watch may not be advisable! It does not need to be a complex survey; the trick is having a smaller number of good quality, simply worded questions that when answered give you the range of information your group requires to plan work.

It's also worth remembering that you can do another audit sometime in the future so trying to cram as many questions as possible into the survey doesn't really need to happen. Equally, you don't want to be carrying out audits every few months as the community will get fed up giving information!

Since the purpose of the audit is to help the group to develop a plan of action, the group must be sure that it will use the findings of the audit or survey to inform their plans. It may be risky to ask for information about issues your group cannot react to because you don't have the capacity, the know-how or expertise; you may inadvertently create an expectation within your target group that you are going to do something about an issue because you have asked questions relating to it, so be careful. Equally, avoid personal or sensitive questions when you can clearly explain why this information is needed.

Early in the process it is useful to agree a chronological list of all the tasks that make up the audit stage. These might include the following:

- Discussions about reasons for audit, the content and scale
- Agreeing a questionnaire
- Informing the community
- Selecting the interviewers (these may be your committee)
- Training the interviewers
- Running a pilot survey to see if the questions are appropriate
- Feedback from pilot
- Adjusting the questionnaire
- Doing the interviews
- Analysing the results
- Writing a draft report
- Discussion of draft with the group and possibly some focus groups
- Discussion of final report
- Launch of final report.

Having agreed on the list of tasks involved it is useful to divide the list in three:

- The tasks that the group can carry out effectively without additional support;
- The tasks that only a trained person could carry out;
- The tasks that the group will need help with.

Also, timetable the tasks into short/medium and long term actions to help you plan ahead. There are a number of organisations, individuals and agencies that may help groups to carry out audits and surveys. Some of this help may be free and some may have a cost. The following agencies and organisations may be able to provide help and support: District Councils; Supporting Communities NI; local Community Resource Centres; Northern Ireland Science Shop; Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA); Community Change; Community Places; Rural Development Council; Rural Community Network and the Workers' Educational Association for training support. In addition, the Community Relations Council (or the Community Relations Officer in the District Council) can help with the community relations aspect of any audit.

The target or beneficiary group needs to be informed in advance that the group is carrying out an audit. Information should include the expected benefits, how and when the audit will be carried out, establishing that those contributing will be kept anonymous and that in order for the best possible benefits to be realised, it is important that as many people as possible participate and therefore their support would be appreciated. This can be done through a local newsletter, through bulletins, local newspapers and notices in appropriate places.

Interviewers may be paid or voluntary. Depending upon your budget and the experience of local people, you may take the decision that your audit will be carried out by voluntary workers. In this case it is crucial that you host information and planning sessions with them so that they are clear about what they are doing and how they should be doing it. Even if you have the budget to pay for experienced people to carry out the audit, it is still important to host information and planning sessions, although this should take up a lot less of your time.

There should be enough interviewers to enable the survey to be carried out over a reasonably short time period. These decisions will be based partly on cost and partly on availability of volunteers or those tasked with carrying out the survey. Interviewers will need to be prepared for speaking with a range of people and will need clear instruction about the households they are to interview, when and where to hand in completed questionnaires, what to do when no one is home, how often they are expected to call back, the timeframe within which they are working, when and how much they will be paid (if relevant).

The interview should not last too long (15-20 minutes maximum) and should of course be confidential. The format of the questionnaire should be split into sections around specific issues. Develop a draft questionnaire and test it. Target a small number of people and review the entire process – how easily the questions were understood, how easily the information obtained can be compiled and used etc. Develop a plan which details who needs to be targeted by the audit and when and review this list so that you are certain that the section of people you want to get information from is correct. When the audit has been completed, it should be analysed and compiled into a report or plan of action - with priorities identified and a timetable for action noted.

When this final report with conclusions and recommendations has been agreed, the next step is normally to launch the report. Organising a community celebration is one good way of achieving this because it creates a good opportunity to bring people together, to thank them for their input and to discuss what your group intends to do with the findings of the audit. It is also a good opportunity to invite those organisations and agencies that you intend to work with and commence discussions with them about your working relationship.

It is a good idea to produce copies of the final report including an explanation of the process your group went through to complete the process; the choices you made regarding the survey sample and, of course, the results - a compilation of information gathered from those the audit targeted.

Other Sources of Information

Other useful sources of information available to groups regarding need are statutory and government departments who, in the course of their work, regularly gather a range of information. This information includes for example, the most recent census results, unemployment figures, the number of children on free school meals, housing information, Health and Social Services figures for disability and older people. Much of this information may be available from various sources such as the District Council, N.I. Housing Executive, Public Health Agency, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Rural Development Council, a Health Action Zone or local Development Agency (such as the Belfast Regeneration Office/North West Development Office). Official statistics on deprivation are also available - the current guide being the Northern Ireland Deprivation Measure 2010 (Noble Report). Groups can access this information directly from NISRA's website: www.nisra.gov.uk .

Section 5: Developing a Plan of Action

"If you don't know where you are going you are sure to end up somewhere else". Mark Twain

What is an Action Plan?

A plan of action simply refers to organising what your group hopes to achieve over a certain period of time, whether it be six months, a year, two years or more. It is not essential to have an action plan but it is certainly advisable, especially in circumstances when there are a range of issues and a collective group of people attempting to address them. It is a good habit to develop action plans regularly (every 12, 18 or 24 months) and to try to ensure that the group is not operating without one because this can increase the risk that there is no focus to your work and, therefore, the impact of your work may be significantly diminished or reduced.

The main need for action planning is to make sure the group has a clear, agreed sense of direction. All too often members of groups find that all their energy is being spent managing what they do on a day-to-day basis rather than considering the impact and success of their work. Thus, action planning is necessary because:

- It can make your group much more effective in bringing about the change or improvement they seek because it provides a structure and a timeframe in which to do this;
- It can help you effectively measure and monitor your progress and therefore quickly identify and address any unforeseen challenges or barriers;
- It ensures that you make best use of the skills, time and energy of your group members because it provides the opportunity to effectively match tasks with those best suited to achieving them
- It enables you to evaluate how successful the work of your group is.

Getting Prepared

Before you embark on developing an action plan, especially if it is your group's first attempt, it's really important that you are in the position to make informed decisions about its content. This can be achieved very practically by:

- Organising meetings and discussions with appropriate representatives such as other local groups and community development workers, development staff from other relevant agencies and organisations such as the council, health trusts, government departments and funders to find out what their organisations do and what, in their view, may be the challenges or considerations for the group in their work. Many of these organisations and agencies may offer continued support to the group as a result so it can be a worthwhile exercise

- Visiting other organisations and projects (generally referred to as 'good practice visits') with relevant experience and speaking to them about their experiences and especially those instances where they experienced difficulties and how they addressed them. This can be extremely useful when your group is attempting to develop solutions around the trickier aspects of your work because you'll have the benefit of others' experience

- Gathering and reviewing, as a group, relevant information such as the findings of your own audit or survey, the plans or research of other agencies and organisations etc.

The plan should be ambitious but realistic, so that it creates motivation, enthusiasm and, most importantly, it produces results. A group will normally make several plans of action in its lifetime so it will not be necessary to fit everything into the first two years; it is important not to aim beyond what you know you can achieve in that time. It should be developed in a format that is user-friendly and generally should cover the What (the specific action), Why (what you aim to achieve as a result of the action), When (for how long), How (the approach you will take or the way you will work) and Who (committee, staff, volunteers, others etc).

It is useful for a new group to agree a short, simple plan of action, say for the first six months, so that a sense of direction, motivation and purpose can be developed and to provide the time to draw up a more considered and researched plan.

Developing the Plan

It is generally a good idea to carry out a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis as a starting point for developing your action or work plan. A SWOT analysis can help you work out how effective you are as a group, the external factors affecting the way the group operates, how it might achieve its aims and the financial/resource climate within which the group is operating.

A SWOT analysis is an examination of the Strengths (the things you are good or can excel at), Weaknesses (those things that you know are not necessarily your strongest points), Opportunities (which relate directly to developing your group and its work, such as funding, training, a service that you have the potential to provide and which someone needs etc) and Threats (those things which have the potential to negatively affect your group and its work). You could invite others to assist in carrying out your SWOT analysis - those who have a good understanding of your group and the work you are intending. This can help your group to be objective in reviewing your work and resist the temptation of not facing those things that you may feel represent the negative aspects of your work or your weaknesses.

The easiest, most effective method of carrying out your SWOT and developing your plan is through structured discussion within the group. It is generally a good idea to agree a series of meetings and discussion topics for those meetings i.e. what do we want to achieve, why do we want to achieve this, when do we realistically believe it can be achieved, who needs to be involved, how much time and energy will need to be spent on achieving etc. If you take a disciplined approach to this then it may be likely your group will not need the support of someone independent with experience in facilitating these types of discussions. However, having someone with this experience is useful because they will make sure that your discussions do not get stuck on a particular issue and can very often lend advice on the best way for things to be achieved. Independent facilitation generally costs money, so consider this before you make your decision. There are many theories about the best way to develop an action plan. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has found *The Complete Guide to Business and Strategic Planning* by Alan Lawrie very straightforward because it includes a 7-S framework that represents (we believe) a user-friendly way of planning. We've endeavoured to supplement the framework by listing questions to help you with your planning process and would recommend that you consider using these questions to help you develop your strategy and your action plan:

Strategy
- Does the group have a clear purpose?
- Is the group ready for achieving the desired impact?
- Does the group understand its own strategy?
- Do others easily understand the strategy of the group?

Structure
- Is the way you divide your work sensible and practical?
- Are the structures the group has in place effective in achieving your goals?
- Does the group's structure create good communication and information sharing between people?

Staff (if you have any)
- Do we have the right mix of posts and are the tasks, duties and responsibilities contained in each job description what you need to achieve your goals?
- Have you appropriately developed staff support, terms and conditions of employment etc?

Skills

- Do you have the right skills mix within the group to govern and direct your work?
- Are there any current skills (capacity) gaps in the group?
- Are you maximising the skills and capacity you have?

Systems

- Does the group have sufficient management control over resources?
- Does the group know what things cost and what sources of income are anticipated?
- Do you have the most effective approach to decision making (is it fair, is it structured, do you take too long to make decisions, why?)

Style

- Do you have the right relationship with your target group and beneficiaries, how do you want to involve your target group in your work?
- Do you have the right type of image/public profile; what does your image say about you and are you happy with that?

Shared Values

- Are there certain principles that you as a group want to adhere to? (Is being up front and transparent about all aspects of your work important to you? Do you want to ensure that you treat everyone fairly and equitably? Is minimising any negative impact your work might have on the environment important to you?)
- Is there a clear agreement about what is important to the group?

Putting the Plan on Paper

Your action or work plan format needs to be one that is suitable for your group to use; there is nothing worse than going through the planning process to end up with a document that you don't understand because it's too complex or you don't refer to or use because it's not designed in a user-friendly way. There is no need to overcomplicate how it reads; in fact, if you stick to a few key things it should be easily put together and, ultimately, something that your group easily uses. Many plans are in table format with similar headings to the following:

Action (What)	**Outcome** (Why)	**Timeframe** (When & for how long)	**Lead Person** (Who)	**Financial Implications** (Anticipated costs associated with the action)
Details	Details	Details	Details	Details

Your group may also decide to expand the content of your action plan to help you review your work and you may also decide that you want to share your action plan with other people that you work with or work on behalf of. If so you could supplement it by including:

- An overall summary of the most important points of the plan and the purpose of the group;
- Background information about the group and what it has achieved to date;
- Information about the community/target group that you serve;
- Information about the work you want to do over the next period of time and why;
- Information about your method or approach; how the group plans to achieve its aims and objectives, who will lead this process and with whom you intend to work in partnership, if applicable;
- Information about how the action plan is evaluated and reviewed i.e. the ways in which those interested in your work can find out what you successfully achieved and, equally as important, what you did not achieve.

Section 6: Financial Management & Fundraising

Financial Management

Managing money is a task that requires understanding and planning by the entire group. Many groups are tempted to leave the finances, or managing the money, to the treasurer; this can especially be the case where the group has someone with bookkeeping or accountancy skills in the role of treasurer. When this happens, the mystique around the finances can become greater, leaving many members of the group feeling they know little or nothing about the financial position of the organisation. This can create anxiety and/or an environment where group members take little interest in fundraising or financial management because they don't fully understand. There is a real need to demystify finances, primarily because appropriate financial management is one of the key areas of governance for all management committee members. A finance report should be presented at each committee meeting and all discussions on expenditure should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

What Needs to be Included?

All committee members should be involved, to some degree, in developing the following:

- The costs associated with the work of the organisation (setting the annual budget);
- An understanding of all financial support or funding secured;
- An understanding about the financial management requirements of funders;
- Appropriate financial management procedures for the group including the authorisation of budgets, funding applications, payments, cheque signing etc;
- Regular, user-friendly financial reports;
- Regular examination of financial reports.

Overseeing appropriate financial management should never be left to a paid worker because, as already outlined, this is essentially one of the key governance functions of the committee. It is important that the committee identifies the degree to which designated staff can make financial management decisions; from a practical point of view it may be necessary to allow decisions regarding small items of expenditure to be made by the most senior member of staff.

Developing Procedures

The key to managing finances is to keep good written/computerised records. It is good practice to develop a budget identifying what money/funding the group will need over a given period of time (for a particular funding period or for the full year) or for carrying out a specific activity. The budget and financial reporting become much more understandable when expenses are broken down under headings: electricity, heat, telephone, rent, stationery, equipment etc.

To safeguard the organisation, three or four people (one of whom should be the treasurer) are normally appointed to act as cheque signatories and therefore, cheques are not valid without the signatures of at least two of those appointed. The cheque signatories should not be related (e.g. members of the same household or family) in order to avoid any suggestion of fraud. The treasurer or any other of those designated to sign cheques should never, ever sign blank cheques; if this is allowed within your organisation then there are obvious risks associated with it, the most obvious being theft. Signatories should also never sign a cheque that they are a beneficiary of – e.g. expenses, salary etc. It is also not good practice for staff members to be signatories. Many groups develop their own financial management procedures to be clear about how their finances will be managed and there are a lot of examples of good financial management practice within the community sector. One of the most effective ways in which new groups can develop their procedures is by seeking advice from other groups who have developed their financial management procedures over a long period of time; seeking this advice is a good way of helping you develop your own systems/format.

Ideally a certified auditor should audit the financial affairs of the organisation each year. This provides an independent assessment of the organisation's financial situation and satisfies the need for accountability when your organisation has received public funds.

Understanding finances can give group members a greater feeling of ownership because they can make more informed decisions about the work of the organisation. Those groups who continue to leave the responsibility of financial management to solely the treasurer or a specific member of staff should proceed with caution; in the eventuality of fraud or financial mismanagement, the entire management committee are legally responsible.

Here are a number of things to consider when developing good financial management practice:

- Set up a clear workable system from the outset or as early as possible
- Get outside help, if necessary, in setting up a financial management system suited to your group (your capabilities and the information needs of your committee)
- Set up a bank account with at least 3 signatories. One of these should be the treasurer
- Establish an appropriate record keeping system either by using a manual system with the necessary accounts books or using Microsoft Excel or other more suited computerised packages
- Agree procedures for financial reporting including the format for financial reports and how regularly they will be reviewed and discussed by the group - usually at each meeting
- Build relationships with your bank; seek concessions; challenge charges; negotiate rates. The bank people may be interested and supportive and may have advice to offer
- Agree annual audit procedures/select auditors
- Avoid cash payments for any item over £20
- Keep petty cash spend to a minimum.

Fundraising

Most activities have associated costs; therefore, the need to fundraise is an important aspect of the work of many community-based groups. Securing funding can sometimes be a tricky and lengthy process and therefore requires careful planning. It's also essential that the group does not get into the habit of 'chasing' funding just because it's available. This can be a counter-productive strategy because the group generally ends up implementing a set of activities that bears little resemblance to what they originally set out to do.

A far better approach is to directly link your funding needs to the actions/activities your group has identified in your action or work plan i.e. 'why, when and what do we need money for' as opposed to 'who's giving out money, how much can we get and let's worry about what we need to do for it later'. Having a plan of work/action plan can really make the process of funding much easier. As already stated, when your group has planned activities, then it's much easier to identify costs.

Key Sources

- Your own fundraising efforts
- Statutory and related sources such as District Councils, government departments, European Union funds, Health Trusts, NI Housing Executive, Education and Library Boards, Big Lottery or the International Fund for Ireland;
- Charitable trusts, such as the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland; the Building Change Trust; the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust; Lloyds/TSB, Children in Need; Comic Relief; John Moore's Foundation; Ulster Garden Villages Trust;
- Sponsorship from the business sector and others;
- Own income generation;
- 'In-kind' contributions such as the use of resources including people, buildings, equipment, expertise etc.

Statutory Sources

The main method of securing statutory or government funding is via submitting an application for funding to one of their advertised funding programmes. Each agency will have their own set of application procedures and, just like many other programmes of funding, certain expectations relating to the appropriate management of the funds and what will be achieved as an outcome (generally referred to as funding criteria). It's a good habit to obtain all the information you can regarding the funding and to supplement this by contacting the most appropriate person within the agency to discuss and clarify the level of information required within the application and what they expect as a result of providing funding support. Agencies and government departments tend to make a lot of their information available on their websites so it's always useful to check these. A more comprehensive list of statutory sources is detailed below:

- District Councils
- The Voluntary & Community Unit of the Department for Social Development
- Department for Education & Learning
- Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Office of the First and Deputy First Minister.
- Education and Library Boards.
- Health Trusts.

As already indicated, statutory sources have their own programmes of funding which relate to specific areas of activity such as good relations, youth, education, training etc so you will need match this criteria to the focus of your work. The Department for Social Development has produced an informative guide to sources of government funding, the Government Funding Database, which can be found at their website www.dsdni.gov.uk - go to the section on the voluntary and community sector and click on the link 'Government Grants to Voluntary and Community Sector database'. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) also provides funding guidance and access to Grant Tracker.

Other Agencies

- International Fund for Ireland
- Sports Council (NI)
- Arts Council (NI)
- Community Relations Council
- Invest Northern Ireland
- Rural Development Council
- Big Lottery
- Building Change Trust.

Trusts/Foundations

- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Lloyds TSB
- Children in Need
- Ulster Garden Villages
- John Moore's Foundation
- Women's Caring Trust
- Tudor Foundation.

Most trusts expect groups to submit some form of written proposal or application so it is important to approach the task in a planned way. Again, get as much information relating to the funding as you can, including making contact with the funder in question to seek clarification if there are aspects of the process of which you are uncertain.

There are sources of information available which have been designed to help you find appropriate funder/s best suited to your funding needs:

- *Independent Funding for Voluntary Action,* advice booklet available from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action's Grant Tracker website which requires a membership/subscription fee but is an excellent source of information

- *The Directory of Grant-Making Trusts* (Charities Aid Foundation)
- *Guide to the Major Trusts* (Directory of Social Change).

Information on how to prepare an application is also available from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

Own Fundraising/Sponsorship and Income Generation

There are other ways for community-based groups to raise money e.g. ballots, car boot sales, events with an entry fee such as performances, quiz nights, sports days, family fun days, BBQs and other events like sponsored walks and community fairs. Developing this type of fundraising can be a chance to learn new skills including planning and organising and, although the amounts raised may be small in comparison to larger scale grants via trusts and statutory agencies, it can provide a really flexible source of income that can be used to cover the costs of items that other funding sources cannot. This kind of fundraising can be a way of involving people, especially those from your target or beneficiary group. It can also be an effective way of attracting and making good use of the skills and energy of your volunteers.

When groups embark on their own programme of fundraising, it illustrates to funders that there is a strong commitment to securing the necessary resources to develop and continue work. This is generally looked upon favourably because it can indicate that your group is serious about achieving your goals.

The key to this type of fundraising is planning and preparation. Even organising a simple ballot will require planning; developing posters, negotiating the donation of prizes, organising people to sell ballots, collecting ballot money etc. It's particularly important if you are considering a larger scale fundraising event, such as a quiz night, that it is appropriately planned and organised. To get as many people to the event as possible it may be important to organise entertainment, food etc especially if you are considering charging an entrance fee. These types of events may also provide the opportunity of securing sponsorship in return for some advertising or promotion on behalf of a local business or other organisation.

You may want to consider charging fees for some of the services your group intends to provide, for example training courses, crèche or playgroup fees, luncheon club fees, membership fees etc. Your group may decide to produce and sell goods such as calendars, books, cards etc. If you have your own premises, you could consider renting some of the space to other groups or organisations, although think this through carefully because there may be VAT implications or other landlord legal obligations.

'In Kind' Income

A source of income that is frequently overlooked and undervalued is 'in kind' income. Examples of 'in kind' income are:

- Donation of property – either by an individual, a company or statutory body;
- Use of property without any rent – a good example is the Housing Executive's policy of allowing a community organisation the use of one of its houses;
- Free transportation;
- Subsidising administrative costs – where a company or statutory body absorbs the expenses of a community group either by paying for them or providing them with services;
- Publicity space, e.g. free ads in shops;
- Loan of equipment;
- Free supply of advice and specialised skills
- Volunteer input/hours.

General Fundraising Tips

- Use a variety of fundraising methods and consider developing a seasonal plan detailing which fundraising activities are best suited to certain times/periods of the year
- Illustrate that your group has planned ahead
- Consider joint fundraising activities with another group
- Avoid fundraising that is very costly; this may be risky because there is no guarantee of a 'return'
- Promote the success of events and activities that you have organised - communicating the amount you have raised and how it will be put to good use, possibly through a local newsletter, can help to secure continued support
- Say "Thanks" to those who have helped out either by volunteering or contributing
- Carry out a specific session each year to review and plan fundraising
- There is an abundance of funding expertise across the community sector in Northern Ireland so if your group does not feel they have the necessary skills to fundraise there's plenty of expert help to increase your skills in this area; ask for it
- Do not simply copy and paste the information from one application into all those funders you are requesting grant aid from; this approach can be detected very easily and is generally frowned upon. You need to answer the questions in each application form specifically; allow the time for this. State the obvious; never presume that trusts and other agencies will have a sound understanding of your work, even those with whom you have an existing working relationship
- Ensure the information you are providing has clarity and that it is consistent. Check that you have not said something in one part of your application or proposal that could appear to conflict with information you have provided in other sections.

Section 7: Monitoring and Evaluation

What is it & Why do it?

Monitoring is the process of regularly gathering and recording information about the activities that are taking place within your project or programme. It is important because without it your group will struggle to assess if the work you are doing is on 'the right track'.

Evaluation is the process of effectively using the monitoring information you have gathered to work out:

- The progress you have made to date
- The impact your work is having
- If the right people are involved in the work
- What learning there is for the group any from successes and failures
- How well the resources you have are being used to achieve your aims/goals
- If your approach to your work is the right one to achieve your aims/goals
- Identifying where adjustments or amendments to projects or programmes may be necessary.

The need for monitoring and evaluation is a logical and practical one. Without doing it, the energy of your group may be used in the wrong places ultimately resulting in your 'straying' away from achieving the goals and targets you had originally set. It is a risky strategy to carry out your work without monitoring and evaluation. There may be situations when your group is unsuccessful in achieving its goals; regular monitoring and evaluation will enable you to identify these situations and identify solutions in a timely and effective way.

Getting into good monitoring and evaluation habits can be of immense benefit to groups. It makes the planning process easier because the group can easily identify areas of previous work that went to plan or failed and thereby easily learn from past mistakes or successes. It can help a group to identify, early on, what aspects of their work are not successful or, perhaps, are no longer relevant because the needs of the target or beneficiary group have shifted or changed. In short, good monitoring and evaluation can make your group more efficient in how you use your resources and/or help you to make a good case for future funding.

Many community groups have been renowned for shying away from monitoring and evaluation or only doing it because it is a condition of the funding they receive. For some, the mere mention of 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' can often create negative images generally linked to the feeling that funders are inspecting the group to point out or bring attention to the aspects of their work that are not succeeding. However, monitoring and evaluation are beneficial to community groups for a variety of reasons, not least improving the way in which they identify, approach and carry out their work. Having good monitoring and evaluation habits can help the group measure its own effectiveness; it can enable the group to recognise and measure its achievements. Looked at in this way, monitoring and evaluation are useful tools for planning and reviewing the group's work.

Ensuring appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems and practices are in place is also a 'governance' or management committee function. It is the role of the management committee to regularly check whether the organisation is progressing in line with what has been planned and to identify alternative courses of action, if necessary, in good time.

Methods of Evaluation

There are two main models of evaluation: self-evaluation and external evaluation. The group itself carries out self-evaluation; you develop a structure for monitoring and evaluating your work. External evaluation is carried out by an independent expert who is external to the group and can therefore provide a high level of objectivity when measuring the results of the group's work, its successes etc.

Self-evaluation requires discipline on the part of the group; you need to be consistent in recording your progress (or otherwise) and then be objective when reviewing what has been achieved. External evaluation costs money and will still require the involvement of the group in providing information to the external evaluator about progress and achievements etc. Self-evaluation may also require training for the management committee and for those staff involved in recording or tracking progress. Generally, groups opt for a mixture of both self-evaluation and external evaluation because it provides a strong basis from which to review work, learn from mistakes and therefore plan for the future.

The Benefits of Self-Evaluation

- It can build the self-confidence of group members by involving them in the discussion and planning from the start
- It gives control to the group and empowers participants
- It creates the dynamic or environment for consistently asking for user or stakeholder feedback
- It enables participants to examine how the objectives of the group can be more effectively achieved, without feeling that their personal contribution is being examined/questioned
- It is cheaper/more cost effective
- It promotes learning within the group.

The Drawbacks of Self Evaluation

- Some funding bodies and other relevant organisations and agencies may not feel that the results that a group produces as a result of their own monitoring and evaluation has the appropriate level of objectivity and therefore may not seriously consider them
- It is labour intensive - it demands a high degree of planning and requires a real time commitment on the part of the committee and/or relevant staff
- It can be monotonous and repetitive
- It requires continued discipline
- It requires consistent objectivity and the ability to admit when something is going wrong, even those aspects of your work that you hold in high esteem or high value.

Independent or External Evaluation

The Benefits of External Evaluation

- It can be a positive experience for group members if they are facilitated to participate in the process to their desired level
- Where the objectives of the evaluation are clear and the indicators are agreed, the process can be a valuable learning experience because it provides the opportunity for the development of new skills and capabilities
- It provides objective results
- The process may generate new insights and learning for the group as to how effective they are and how the users/community perceives your work.

The Drawbacks of External Evaluation

- If the completion of an external, independent evaluation is a condition of funding, some groups may feel pressured, anxious or frustrated that the process may present their group and their work in a negative light.
- External evaluations cost money
- An effective working relationship needs to be established between the committee and the external evaluator and this will require specific time and effort on the part of the committee
- Sometimes the things upon which the group is being evaluated may not be obvious or apparent. If this is the case, it is important that you ask questions and seek clarification to diminish possible suspicions
- Some external evaluations can be carried out with minimal research - e.g. speaking only to one worker and possibly the group's Chair and therefore ends up with limited value.

When an external evaluation is being carried out, the group should be provided with summaries of the findings at key stages. They should receive a draft report to review and make comment upon and a final draft towards the end of the process at which stage they can make final observations or comments.

The full, final report should be sent to the group by the evaluator, who then has responsibility for ensuring that the relevant organisations, such as existing and potential funding bodies, are provided with a copy in a timely manner.

Timescale

It is important, particularly in the case of external evaluation, that a structured schedule is established detailing the key stages of the evaluation, timeframes, cost, concentration of work and people involved. This information needs to be clearly understood within the organisation and by the external evaluator, if applicable. This will ensure that it is conducted in a structured, organised way and that findings will be ready for review within a given time period.

Uses of an Evaluation

As already indicated, the findings of an evaluation are very useful regardless of whether they are positive or negative, they should be used by the group in a number of ways:

- A tool to help to review and plan work;
- A tool for marketing and advertising the successes and strengths of the group;
- A tool to identify gaps and new opportunities for action by the group;
- A tool to provide feedback to stakeholders such as target or beneficiary groups, other neighbouring community groups, potential new partnerships or those group and agencies you may wish to work collaboratively with, funders etc;
- A tool to identify, acknowledge and celebrate achievements.

Appendix 1: Jargon Buster

(DIFFERENT WORDS, PHRASES AND ABBREVIATIONS THAT ARE OFTEN USED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY SECTOR)

Accountability

Community groups act on behalf of or in the interests of communities and certain sets of people. This means that community groups have a responsibility to be open and transparent about the actions and work they are doing on behalf of these communities/people and answerable to their communities. When a group receives financial support or grant aid from a funding body, it is also accountable for how and on what this money is spent. Being accountable means that the group is answerable, responsible and liable for its actions.

Action Plan

A programme of work or 'action' identified and agreed by the committee and staff (if applicable). An action plan will detail the Who, What, Why, Where and When: who is responsible for carrying out the action, what the action is, why it needs to take place (linked to the group's purpose, aims and objectives), where the action will take place, when it will happen and how long the work or action may last. Action plans are used to organise and add structure to the work of the group; they help the group to develop realistic timescales and to distribute work fairly across the organisation.

Aims
The specific things you want to achieve i.e. what you are 'aiming' to achieve.

Apportionment

How you divide something. It is generally used to describe how you 'apportion' or divide your costs, typically core or central costs like rent, rates, heat, electricity, telephone, Internet etc to individual sources of funding or projects. Groups with small amounts of funding may not need to apportion or allocate a charge for core costs to their projects; apportionment is usually necessary when groups have larger amounts of funding from multiple funding sources.

Baseline

The starting point from which progress, improvement or other change can be measured. Many groups endeavour to establish a baseline position or a starting point for their work which is directly linked to the needs, issues or difficulties the community they aim to work with are experiencing. By doing this the group can more effectively track the difference their work is making over time. Consider a group about to develop a training and education project aimed at improving the qualifications of people in an area that has high unemployment levels. By gathering information about levels of educational achievement, the number of people unemployed and the number of people in low-skilled work within that community, the group can establish a starting position for their work. Once this is established, the group can regularly review or monitor the situation to identify any shifts or improvements, especially those that are a direct result of the work they are carrying out. (See also monitoring and evaluation below).

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries are the people that will benefit from the work of your group.

Capacity

Capacity relates to a number of things such as the knowledge, skills and capabilities of the people involved in the group (staff, committee and volunteers), the number of people the group has as a resource to implement its work, the size of funding, grants or other sources of finance (money) that have been acquired by the group, the building/s and equipment owned by the group etc. It is important for groups to understand what their capacity is because it means they will be able to develop realistic plans of work in line with their ability or capacity to achieve and it will also enable them to identify areas where capacity may need to be developed.

Capacity Building

This is usually a programme of activity (training, education, experience) aimed at increasing the capacity of the group. It relates to developing the skills, knowledge and capabilities of the people involved in the group, both staff and committee. It may also relate to increasing the volunteer base the group has, as well as increasing the physical resources the group may have (equipment, premises, outside space etc).

Charities Commission for Northern Ireland or 'Charities Commission'

The Charities Commission for Northern Ireland is a body that has been set up to ensure that local charities in Northern Ireland are adhering to the Charities Act 2008. All community-based groups, both new and existing, who make the decision to obtain 'charitable status', will have to register with this body. The Charities Commission will be responsible for regulating all registered charities across Northern Ireland to ensure they are developing their organisations in line with expected standards of good practice.

Community Interest Company (CIC), Social Enterprise, Community Business, Community Enterprise

These terms generally relate to a commercial business owned and run by a community organisation. Most groups set up their own community business to develop a consistent, dependable source of income that will enable them to continue their work and help them become less dependent upon grants and funding. Profits from these community-owned businesses or enterprises are generally re-invested back into the community group. This process is often described as 'profit making not profit taking' because the group uses the profit for the benefit of the community it serves and not the individuals involved in the group, unlike businesses in the private sector who seek profit to financially benefit the owners and shareholders.

Community & Community Sector

Those involved in community work use this term repeatedly; it can relate to a specific district, neighbourhood or area (for instance a group operating across Ballymoney may describe that area as their 'community') and it can relate to certain sets of people, for instance the Republican, Nationalist, Catholic, Protestant, Unionist or Loyalist community or the business community. 'Sector' means either a piece, a division or a zone; it's a term that helps to group similar things together. The term 'Community Sector' groups together community organisations (and their work) because their purposes are very similar in that most are aiming to improve the lives of local communities and/or certain sets of people within those communities.

Community Relations

The term 'relations' is a way of describing the degree to which people relate to each other and get along with one another. In Northern Ireland, the term 'community relations' refers to how well the groups of people that make up society here get along. Historically this term would have predominantly referred to the quality of relations between the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican communities (or CNR communities) and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist communities (or PUL communities). More recently the term has also been used with reference to the quality of relations between such communities and those from other ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland such as Chinese, Indian, Polish, Lithuanian, Filipino, African etc. It can also refer to the relations between different communities of interest, such as the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered (LGBT) community. The term 'good relations' may also be used to describe this work.

Competence

Competence is similar to capacity in that it relates to the skills, abilities or knowledge levels within groups to carry out tasks and actions. It's important for groups to understand their competencies because, just like capacity, it will help them develop realistic plans. There's absolutely no point in developing an action plan which is far beyond the competence of the group to successfully achieve. Understanding competencies will also assist groups to identify the training and education needs of the committee, staff and volunteers, especially those required to successfully deliver/implement their work.

Core Costs/Programme Costs

Core costs generally relate to the central expenses of the group and can include items like rent, rates, electricity and telephone, heating, and audit etc. They can also relate to salary costs associated with administration, reception, finance and managerial costs etc.

Most funders or grant providers will want community groups to identify what their core costs are because they may make a contribution towards these costs, based on the size of the particular piece of work or project they have agreed to fund.

Programme costs tend to be those costs specific to a particular piece of work or project. They can include the costs of education and training, materials, tutors' fees, equipment, transport costs, costs associated with publicity or marketing etc. They can also include the costs of staff that are specific to a particular project or piece of work.

Core Funding

Core funding is a term that relates to the sources of grant-aid or finance the group have managed to secure to cover their core costs.

Collaboration

To work collaboratively with another group or organisation means that you will work jointly or in partnership with them. This could include the development of joint projects, joint funding applications or in identifying joint solutions to problems or issues that similarly affect the communities/people that you work on behalf of.

Contract of Funding

(Can also be referred to as Letter of Offer.) This document contains information relating to the targets and outcomes that a group is expected to achieve in return for funding and the ways in which they are expected to appropriately manage the funding. It is legally binding because it details the 'contract' between the group and the funding organisation.

Cross Community Work/Cross Community Projects

In Northern Ireland, cross community work refers to the development of joint projects between people from different religious, political, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; it refers to the contact, communication and collaboration between those different communities (see also Community Relations).

Deprivation Levels

Deprivation means a lack or scarcity of something. From a community development perspective it relates to the levels of disadvantage being experienced by local communities. It is the responsibility of government to regularly measure deprivation levels (here in Northern Ireland an organisation called the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency or NISRA do this) and the information gathered helps the government decide where public sector funding is most needed. Deprivation is defined by NISRA using a number of factors including income levels, levels of employment and unemployment, levels of educational achievement, levels of crime, health statistics and ease of access to key services (public transport, health and leisure). It is also referred to as Multiple Deprivation Measures (MDM) or the Noble Index.

Development Plan

A development plan is a written document that details the anticipated development stages of a group and its work over a certain time period. It can contain information related to developing the capacity of the group and also the work the group aims to embark upon to develop the community or the set of people they work on behalf of.

Diversity

Diversity describes the differences in people that make up a community. These differences can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, culture and political view etc.

Equality and Equity

Equality and equity are about the provision of equal opportunities, fairness, fair-play and even-handedness to all people, regardless of their background, race, religion, age, gender, sexual persuasion, disability, politics, culture etc. Equality means extending equal treatment to everybody, regardless of these differences. Equity is a different but related concept, which means taking individual circumstances into account. For example, if two people travel to Belfast City Centre and are given an allowance of £2.00 each for their bus fare, then that is treating them equally. But, if one of them has travelled from Fermanagh and the other from Rathcoole, it would not be fair to give them the same amount, as the fare from Fermanagh would be considerably more. If they could each claim the actual bus fare then that would be more equitable.

Empowerment

To empower means to support an individual or a group to have the confidence to make decisions, identify solutions to the problems or issues they are facing and to gain confidence to address the problems or issues they are facing.

ERDF

European Regional Development Fund. European structural funds available for capital and major development projects. Some training and development money may be available through this fund.

ESF

European Social Fund. European structural funds that can be used for projects that involve socio- economic objectives such as training, employment etc.

Evaluation

This term refers to the process that community groups go through to work out whether their work had the desired impact or was successful to the degree they originally anticipated; it's how the group judges the success or failure of its work. Carrying out some form of evaluation is generally a condition of funding - many grant aid or funding bodies may stipulate that they want an independent evaluation of work. This means the group will have to employ someone with evaluation expertise, external to the group, to carry out this work. The process of evaluation is a useful planning and review tool; it can help a group to identify work (and how it is delivered) that has been successful and has had the greatest impact and areas of work that they are particularly good at carrying out or developing. Self-evaluation, or internal evaluation, is the process by which a group carries out this process itself on an ongoing basis.

Ethos or Ethics

Your ethos or ethics are the principles and values that your group holds as important to the development and implementation of your work. It is important to a grouping to discuss their ethos and to be explicit about it.

Funding Critieria

The vast majority of funding bodies will have developed a list of specific outcomes (or results) they expect projects to achieve if they are granted funding. This list is often referred to as funding criteria. Funding critieria will be advertised during the application stage and it is usual for the group to demonstrate in their application how their project meets or fits with the funding criteria.

Government or Statutory Agencies

These are organisations and agencies funded by public sector money to provide those services that government have a statutory or legal responsibility to provide. In Northern Ireland they include the Health Trusts, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, District Councils, Government Departments, the Police, the Child Support Agency, Invest Northern Ireland etc.

Governance

This term is generally used with reference to the responsibilities of management committees: the people who have ultimate power, authority and control within the organisation and who are expected to ensure the appropriate and correct management and development of that organisation, including its constitutional arrangements and financial management processes.

Holistic

Taking a holistic approach means to consider the complete situation or person, not just specific pieces of the situation or specific issues affecting the person.

Impact

This is the effect or the result of the actions undertaken by the group.

Local Strategic Partnership or LSP

LSPs are located within District Councils. They are a body of people, generally key decision makers within the community, voluntary, statutory/government sector, drawn together in one group to determine the best use of certain funding and services. They have been associated with the administration of EU (European Union) PEACE funds over recent years.

Letter of Offer

(or Contract of Funding) This document contains information relating to the targets and outcomes that a group is expected to achieve in return for funding and the ways in which they are expected to appropriately manage the funding. It is legally binding because it details the 'contract' between the group and the funding organisation.

Milestones

This term is used to describe the challenges to be overcome or addressed at different stages of project delivery. Groups should identify milestones during planning and use them to help measure the degree to which they are successfully progressing with a project. This could include things like staff being recruited to the project by a specific date, recruitment of the level of volunteers required to implement the project and the successful training of people to implement certain aspects of the project.

Mission/Mission Statement

A mission statement provides a description of what a group wants to achieve. It can include information about the way in which a group will achieve its goals and those communities or sets of people the group aims to benefit as a result of its work, for instance 'Group ABC aims to reduce the levels of unemployment in the local community by providing high quality education and training opportunities to young people aged 18 to 25'.

Monitoring

To monitor means to watch or to check on and in community development refers to the process of regularly checking how well work is progressing.
Multiple Deprivation Measurement/MDM (or Multiple Deprivation Index)

Government has the responsibility of ranking all the parliamentary wards/districts in Northern Ireland according to their deprivation levels (see also deprivation). In order to do this, information relating to individual factors, such as unemployment and educational achievement levels are combined and a 'multiple' deprivation score is allocated to each Super Output Area/ward/district. This is the baseline that government departments use to measure the impact that public monies is having on improving the lives of people in Northern Ireland. It also helps government to identify the most deprived parliamentary wards/districts, for instance the top 10% most deprived wards or the top 20% most deprived wards. Community groups can also use this information when they are making the case for funding or grant aid because it can help them explain the need for their project and work.

Marginalised

An individual person, specific geographic area or specific set of people that is or feels excluded, isolated, vulnerable and/or powerless within society.

Objectives

Groups develop objectives during planning; they list the place or position where the group wants to be. Individual or overall programmes of work can have more than one objective; there may be a number of things the group wants to achieve or a number of positions/places the group wants to ensure the situation moves toward; for instance: 'to ensure at least 16 young women successfully complete First Aid training'.

Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes are the results of work; outputs relate to the amount of work that has to be undertaken to achieve an outcome. Outputs tend to be tangible, quantifiable entities (you can touch or count them); whereas outcomes are generally changes in an overall set of circumstances or conditions.

Operational

The day to day running of the business or the project.

Recruitment

The process of advertising for, interviewing and selecting the right people for jobs within your organisation.

SMART criteria

This is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. It is a measurement to help groups effectively identify their actions and work. SMART criteria are used during the development of plans; they help groups to strike the right balance to develop plans that are ambitious whilst being realistic.

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is someone who has a vested interest in the work of your group. Stakeholders can include those who will benefit from your work (your target group), those who fund your work, the members of your management committee, your staff, your volunteers, those who supply goods and services to enable your work to take place, other local community groups you work in partnership with etc.

Sustain

To continue or to carry on. Sustaining/Sustainablity relates to the actions that groups undertake to continue their work.

Strategy

A strategy is an overall plan of work for a specific period of time; it will contain details about what you want to achieve, the mission statement of your group and the approach that will be used to carry out work etc.

SWOT Analysis

Is the process of measuring or identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats which relate directly to your organisation or community. It is a tool used during planning and review to help groups make decisions about where they are headed.

Transparency

This terms is used within community development to describe how open or 'transparent' groups are about the various aspects of their work including their successes, their failures, their levels of appropriateness in carrying out their work, their financial management etc.

Target Group

A set of people you want to specifically 'target' to benefit from your work.

Values

To value something is to hold it in importance. Groups generally have certain principles and ways of working which they want to uphold or value throughout the development and implementation of their work. Values may also relate how one group is open to welcoming the participation of all people living in a community irrespective of diversity or differences.

Vision

Ultimately, the 'vision' is where you see the organisation going and/or what your group 'sees' as the ultimate aim, impact, results or benefits of your work.

Sample Constitution for a Community Group

1. Name

The Association shall be called (hereinafter called 'the association')

2. Objects

The Association is established:

2.1 To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the area and its environs (hereinafter described as the area of benefit) and to advance their economic, social, environment, community development and educational welfare without distinction of age, gender, race, political, religious or other opinion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or those with or without dependents by associating with the statutory authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare, health, recreation or leisure time occupation, with the object of improving the condition of life for the said inhabitants.

2.2 To establish community development activities and to promote community facilities and resources and any other facilities which would be of benefit to the inhabitants of the area; to maintain and manage these facilities, or to co-operate with any local or statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such facilities for activities promoted by the association and its constituent bodies in furtherance of the above objects.

2.3 In furtherance of the above object, the association may:

2.3.1 Provide or secure the provision of social services, educational, and recreational facilities and practical assistance for the elderly and disabled, families and other groups within the area of benefit;

2.3.2 Provide or secure the provision of welfare rights advice and information and refer those in need of professional assistance to the agencies;

2.3.3 Provide, maintain and equip or assist in the provision, maintenance and equipment of premises and facilities designed to carry out the objects of the association;

2.3.4 Promote and carry out research, surveys and investigations and publish the useful results thereof;

2.3.5 Work to secure the removal of graffiti in the area and promote the prevention of anti-social activity in public areas within the area of benefit;

2.3.6 Recruit and train volunteers in relevant skills to enable them to carry out the objectives of the Association;

2.3.7 Organise or assist in the organising of meetings, lectures, classes, and exhibitions and publish or assist in publishing reports, periodicals, recordings, books or other documents and information;

2.3.8 Obtain, collect and receive money by ways of grants, donation, bequests, legacies or other lawful method provided that the association may not engage in any form of permanent trading;

2.3.9 Purchase, take on lease or exchange, hire or otherwise acquire any real or personal property and any rights and privileges necessary for the promotion of the above objects and construct, maintain and alter any buildings or facilities which the association may think necessary for the promotion of its objects;

2.3.10 Make appropriate regulations for any property which may be so acquired.

2.3.11 Subject to any consents as may be required by law, sell, let, mortgage, dispose of or return to account all or any property or assets of the association with a view to the furtherance of its objects.

2.3.12 Receive money on deposit or loan and borrow or raise money in such a manner as the association shall think fit subject to such consents as may be required by law.

2.3.13 Invest the monies of the association not immediately required for the furtherance of the said objects in or upon such investments, securities for property as may be thought fit, subject nevertheless to such conditions (if any) as may for the time being be imposed or required by law.

2.3.14 Employ and remunerate any person or persons, not being a member of the Management Committee referred to below, to supervise, organise and carry on the work of the Association and make all necessary and reasonable provisions for the payment of remuneration to all such employees.

2.3.15 Promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the above objects and to that end to work in association with local authorities and voluntary agencies engaged in the furtherance of the above objects in the area of benefit.

2.3.16 Do all such other lawful things as may be necessary for the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the association shall be open to the following:

3.1.1 People aged 18 years or over living within the area of benefit who subscribe to the objects of the association and whose applications for membership are accepted by the Committee; such representatives shall be called Full Members and shall be entitled to vote at meetings of the association.

3.1.2 Organisations working within the area of benefit, whether voluntary or statutory may, upon application to, and with the approval of the Committee, be admitted as Affiliated Members and such approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. Affiliated members shall not have the right to vote at association meetings. Affiliated Members shall each be entitled to be represented at meetings of the Association by a duly authorised representative.

3.1.3 Well-wishers anywhere or persons who, in the opinion of the Committee, have special knowledge or experience to offer to the association; such members shall be Associated Members and shall have the right to vote at meetings of the association;

3.2 The Committee may fix a rate of annual subscription appropriate to each category of membership; may issue membership cards and shall have the right, for good and sufficient reason, to terminate the membership of any member provided that the member concerned shall have the right to be heard by the association before a decision is made final.

4. Management Committee

4.1 Except as provided otherwise in this constitution, the policy and general management of the affairs of the association shall be directed by the committee which shall meet not less than 8 times a year. The Committee shall consist of at least five persons with a maximum of sixteen persons nominated and elected at the Annual General Meeting.

4.2 Nominations from full members of the association for members of the Committee must be in writing, and must be in the hands of the Honorary Secretary of the association at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting hereinafter mentioned.

4.3 Should the number of nominations exceed the number of vacancies, election shall be by secret ballot of the members of the association present and voting at an Annual General Meeting.

4.4 Should the number of nominations be less than the number of vacancies, further oral nominations may, with the approval of those in attendance at the AGM, be invited from members present and voting at the said AGM.

4.5 The Committee elected at an AGM shall have the power to co-opt further members, who shall be Full Members or eligible to become Associated members and who shall serve until the conclusion of the annual business at the next AGM provided that the number of co-opted members shall not exceed one third of the total Full membership of the Committee. Co-opted members shall have the right to vote at committee meetings.

4.6 The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, who shall be the Honorary Offices of the association, shall be Full Members or Associated Members of the association and shall be elected annually by and from the members of the Committee at their first meeting following the AGM. The office of chairperson shall not be held by any one person for more then three consecutive years and such person can therefore only be re-elected as chair twice in immediate succession other then in exceptional circumstances as prescribed by the management committee. In any event, such person is eligible for re-election after standing down for at least one year.

4.7 Any member of the Committee who fails to attend three consecutive Committee meetings without reasonable excuse shall lose his/her place on the Committee which may be filled by co-option in accordance with Clause 4.5 above.

5. Functions of the Committee

5.1 The Committee may make such regulations as they consider appropriate for the efficient conduct of the business of the Committee and the association.

5.2 The Committee may appoint staff as they consider necessary on such terms and conditions as they may determine, provided that such terms and conditions are in keeping with all relevant legislation and good practice.

5.3 The Committee may appoint such sub-committees, advisory groups or working parties of their own members and other persons as they may from time to time decide necessary for the carrying out of their work, and may determine their terms of reference, duration and composition. All such sub-committees shall make regular reports on their work to the Committee.

5.4 The proceedings of the Committee shall not be invalidated by any failure to elect or any defect in the election, appointment, co-options or qualification of any member.

6. Chairing Meetings

All meetings of the association or of the Committee or any of its sub-committees shall be presided over by its Chairperson failing whom its Vice-Chairperson, if one has been appointed. If neither the Chairperson nor Vice-Chairperson is present, those present may elect one of their number to take the Chair. The Chairperson of any meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

7 Finance

7.1 All monies raised by or on behalf of the association shall be applied to further the objects of the association and for no other purpose provided that nothing herein contained shall prevent the payment of legitimate out-of-pocket expenses to members of the association engaged upon the approved business of the association.

7.2 The Honorary Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the finances of the association.

7.3 The financial year of the association shall run from 1st April to 31st March.

7.4 The accounts shall be scrutinised at least once per year by an independent financial assessor who shall be appointed by the Committee.

7.5 A statement of accounts for the last financial year shall be submitted by the Committee to the AGM.

7.6 A bank account shall be opened in the name of the association with the (Name of) Bank or with such other bank as the Committee shall from time to time decide. The Committee shall authorise in writing the Honorary Treasurer and two members of the Committee to sign cheques on behalf of the association. All cheques must be signed by not less than two of the four authorised signatories.

8. Property

8.1 The association may appoint and may terminate the appointment of not less than three people to act as Trustee for the purpose of holding any moneys or property belonging to the association. The title to all or any such real and/or personal property which may be required by or for the purposes of the association shall be vested in the Trustees who shall hold such property in trust for the association. The Trustees shall act under the instructions of the Committee who shall, subject to the approval and consent of the association as determined by a General Meeting, have power to fill vacancies among the Trustees.

9. Annual General Meeting

9.1 The first Annual General Meeting of the association shall be held not later than twelve months after the Inaugural Meeting and in each year thereafter an AGM of the association shall be held at such place and time (not being more than fifteen months after the holding of the preceding AGM) as the Committee shall determine.

9.2 At such Annual General Meeting the business shall include the following:

9.2.1 The election of members to serve on the Committee

9.2.2 The appointment of an independent financial assessor.

9.2.3 The consideration of an Annual Report of the work done by or under the auspices of the Committee.

9.2.4 The consideration of the accounts.

9.2.5 The transaction of such other matters as may from time to time be considered necessary.

10. Special General Meetings

10.1 The Committee may at any time at its discretion and shall upon a requisition signed by not less than twenty full members having the power to vote and giving reasons for the request, call a Special General Meeting of the association for the purpose of altering the constitution in accordance with Clause 12 hereof or of considering any matter which may be referred to them by the Committee or for any other purpose.

11. Rules of Procedure at all Meetings

Voting

11.1 Subject to the provisions of Clause 12 hereof all questions at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote thereat. In case of an equality of votes the Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote.

Minutes

11.2 Minute books shall be kept by the Committee and all other sub-committees and the appropriate Secretary shall enter therein a record of all proceedings and resolutions.

Quorum

11.3 The quorum at General Meetings of the Association shall be 10 and at a committee meeting shall be 5 or other such number as the Committee may from time to time determine.

Standing Orders

11.4 The Committee shall have the power to adopt and issue Standing Orders and/or rules for the association. Such Standing Orders and/or rules shall come into operation immediately provided always that they shall be subject to review by the association in General Meeting and shall not be inconsistent with this Constitution.

12. Alterations to the Constitution

12.1 Any alterations to this Constitution shall receive the assent of not less than two-thirds of the members of the association present and voting at the Annual General Meeting or a meeting specifically called for such purpose provided that notice of any such alteration shall have been received by the Honorary Secretary in writing not less than 21 clear days before the meeting at which the alteration is to be brought forward.

12.2 At least 14 clear days notice in writing of the meeting setting forth the terms of the alteration to be proposed shall be sent by the Honorary Secretary to each member of the association provided further that no alteration shall be made which would cause the association to cease to be a charity at law.

13. Dissolution

13.1 If the Committee by simple majority decide at any time that on the grounds of expense or otherwise it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the association they shall call a meeting of all members of the association who have the power to vote of which meeting not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the Resolution to be proposed thereat) shall be given.

13.2 If such decision shall be confirmed by a simple majority of those present and voting at such meeting, the Committee shall have power to dispose of any assets held by or in the name of the association.

13.3 Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debt and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the association as the Committee decide.

14. Indemnity

The association shall indemnify and keep indemnified every officer, member, volunteer and employee of the association from and against all claims, demands, actions and proceedings (and all costs and expenses in connection therewith or arising therefrom) made or brought against the association in connection with its activities, the action of its officers, members, volunteers or employees, or in connection with its property and equipment but this indemnity shall not extend to liabilities arising from wilful and individual fraud, wrongdoing or wrongful omission on the part of the association or its committee.

(Name of) Community Group

Approved and adopted by the Association and signed on its behalf by :

Chairperson:

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Date:

Appendix 3: Sample of Code of Conduct for Management Committees

(NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Purpose

- To appropriately and progressively govern the group/organization
- To lead the development of good practice across the group/organization
- To consistently ensure a high degree of knowledge and understanding across the group/organization of relevant local community needs and issues
- To maximize the use of the group's/organisation's resources and facilities by the local community
- To ensure that all relevant legislation, policies and procedures are adhered to across the group/organisation
- To work in partnership with (NAME OF GROUP) other relevant groups, organisations and beneficiaries on appropriate issues to maximize benefits to the local community
- To support (NAME OF GROUP) staff to carry out their tasks and duties to the best of their ability
- To create and maintain a progressive and positive working relationship between statutory, community and voluntary partners and stakeholders, the local community, (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee and all (NAME OF GROUP) staff
- Where necessary, seek funding to develop projects, activities and events within (NAME OF GROUP) which are in line with local community needs.

(NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Procedures

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee meetings will take place, for the most part, on a monthly basis. No less than 8 meetings will take place in any calendar year and additional meetings will take place after it has been agreed by the Committee that they are necessary for the successful management of the group
- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee meetings will last approximately 1-2 hours, unless circumstances should arise when decisions relating to the group's business require additional time
- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee meetings will be structured in line with an agenda, which will be developed and distributed in advance of meetings by the Chairperson or Secretary
- The Secretary, at each meeting, will accurately record the decisions of the (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee in a Minutes Book and the minutes of each meeting will be approved at the subsequent meeting by those in attendance. This will include details of agreed expenditure
- In circumstances when Committee Members cannot attend Committee Meetings, apologies must be sent in advance via the Chairperson. Apologies will be accurately recorded as part of the minutes of each meeting
- On an annual basis, (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee will review their purpose, procedures and Code of Conduct to ensure full understanding across the Committee and to amend / adapt these procedures and principles as appropriate
- All new Committee Members will go through a structured induction process during their first three months on (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee. Induction processes will be reviewed and amended / adapted on an annual basis along with purpose, procedures and Code of Conduct

- All (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee business will be dealt with in a professional, non-personal, non-aggressive, non-judgemental manner through the Chairperson

- All Committee Members will be responsible for ensuring they possess an up-to-date copy of all relevant governing documents. All Committee Members will ensure they have a full understanding of their responsibilities, as detailed in group's governing documents.

(NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Code of Conduct

- (NAME OF GROUP) Committee Members will not knowingly or recklessly give any false or misleading information either on his/her behalf or on behalf of anyone else

- All (NAME OF GROUP) Committee Members will act with honestly and integrity and bring credit to the organization/group

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members will not injure the reputation and/or interests of the Committee, its members or its staff

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members will keep abreast of current guidelines, policies and information relevant to the organization/group

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members will avoid Conflicts of Interest and will disclose any Conflicts of Interest during Committee meetings or to the Chairperson in a professional manner

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members will promote the Committee, its work and its staff in a professional manner

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members will not present themselves as having the Committee's support / endorsement unless this has been formally agreed and minuted by the Committee

- No (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee member will criticise individuals or groups – valid concerns, which are directly related to / impact upon Management Committee business, should be directed through the Chairperson to be dealt with in a constructive, professional manner during Committee meetings

- No members of (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee will shout or act aggressively when acting on behalf of the organization/group. Committee Members will ensure they act in a respectful manner when dealing with all stakeholders, including fellow Committee Members, users, user groups, staff, visitors etc.

- All members of (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee will be treated with respect regardless of gender, age, religion, race, sexual orientation etc. All (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee Members suggestions, views or opinions will be equally, respectfully and fairly treated

- (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee members will strive to create a positive, encouraging, focused, motivated environment for all the group's business to be conducted. Members will ensure that their behaviour/attitude does not negatively impact on fellow Committee Members or Committee business

- All (NAME OF GROUP) business will be treated as confidential by Committee Members and dealt with during Committee meetings. Committee Members will not inappropriately discuss group business outside of Committee meetings unless previously agreed by Committee Members at a Committee meeting.

I hereby acknowledge receipt the above Purpose, Procedures and Code of Conduct of (NAME OF GROUP) Management Committee. I agree, as a member of the Management Committee, to comply, at all times, with the details of this document.

Signed:

____

Date:

____

Each Committee Member will receive and sign two copies of the above document. The Chairperson of the organisation will retain one copy on file; the Committee Member for their records will keep the other copy.

Appendix 4: Contact Details of Useful Support Organisations/Agencies

Community Foundation for NI (CFNI)
Citylink Business Park
Albert Street
Belfast
BT12 4HQ
T: 02890 245927
F: 02890 329838
E: info@communityfoundationni.org

Charities Commission for NI
24-26 Arthur Street
Belfast
BT1 4GF
T: 02890 515490
E: admin@charitiescommissionni.org.uk

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Activitiy (NICVA)
61 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast
BT15 2GB
T: 02890 877777
F: 02890 877799
E: info@nicva.org

Voluntary & Community Unit
Department for Social Development
Lighthouse Building
1 Cromac Place
Gasworks Business Park
Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JB
T: 02890 829425
F: 02890 829431
E: vcu@dsdni.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
3rd Floor
Ascot House
24-31 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DB
T: 02890 238645/319666
F: 02890 319485

Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Forestview
Purdy's Lane
Belfast
BT8 7AR
T: 02890 643882
F: 02890 643874
E: info@ycni.org

The Rainbow Project
Belfast LGBT Centre
1st Floor
9-13 Waring Street
Belfast
BT1 2DX
T: 02890 319030
F: 02890 319031
E: info@rainbow-project.org

Equality Commission for NI
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
T: 02890 500600
Textphone: 02890 500589
Enquiry Line: 02890 890890
E: information@equalityni.org

Community Change
Unit 8a, Weavers Court
Linfield Road
Belfast
BT12 5GH
T: 02890 232587
E: info@communitychange-ni.org

CAF (Charities Aid Foundation)
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent ME19 4TA
T: 03000 123 000
F: 03000 123 001
E: enquiries@cafonline.org

Rural Community Network
38a Oldtown Street
Cookstown
BT80 8EF
T: 02886 766670
F: 02886 766006

Volunteer Development Agency
129 Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 1SH
T: 02890 236100
F: 02890 237570
E: info@volunteernow.co.uk

Disability Action
Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED
T: 02890 297880
Textphone: 02890 297882
F: 02890 297881
E: hq@disabilityactionn.org

The Early Years Organisation
6c Wildflower Way
Apollo Road
Boucher Road
Belfast
BT12 6TA
T: 02890 662825
F: 02890 381270

Women's Regional Development Agency
6 Mount Charles
Belfast
BT7 1NZ
T: 02890 230212
F: 02890 244363
E: info@wrda.net

The North West Community Network
23 Bishop Street
L'Derry
BT48 6PR
T: 02871 279090
F: 02871 279357
E: info@nwcn.org

Youth Action NI
14 College Square North
Belfast
BT1 6AS
T: 02890 240551
F: 02890 240556

Community Places
2 Downshire Place
Belfast
BT2 7JQ
T: 02890 239444
F: 02890 231411
E: info@communityplaces.info

Community Network Portadown
Market Lane
Market Street
Portadown
BT62 3JY
T: 02838 392777
F: 02838 362494
E: connet@globalnet.co.uk

NI Human Rights Commssion
Temple Court
39 North Street
Belfast
BT1 1NA
T: 02890 243987
F: 02890 247844

This helpful guide to community development in Northern Ireland will take you step by step through the process of forming a community group or association, determining your aims and objectives and becoming organised. From the essentials of getting started, conducting public meetings through to writing your constitution, the book will guide you in a clear and concise way to your goal of successful community development. There are useful sections on fund-raising and how to manage and evaluate your community ventures if they succeed in attracting funding.

The financial support of the Voluntary and Community Unit of the Department for Social Development enables this publication to be produced.

This is a book bursting with ideas and useful hints you'll want to keep close to hand, whether you are only contemplating forming a community group or are well down the road to managing community development in your neighbourhood.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

supporting people, strengthening communities, building peace

Community House, Citylink Business Park, Albert Street, Belfast BT12 4HQ Tel: 028 9024 5927 Fax: 028 9032 9839
Unit 4B, Rath Mor Centre, Bligh's Lane, Derry City BT48 0LZ Co. Londonderry Tel: 028 7137 1547 Fax: 028 7137 1565