This Strategic Framework for Community Development for Northern Ireland has been developed by the voluntary and community sector, working in partnership with statutory agencies and key Government Departments, in a co-ordinated attempt to explore the purpose, value and contribution of community development practice in Northern Ireland. This process has been facilitated by Rural Community Network, with support from Building Change Trust.
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Overview

This Strategic Framework for Community Development is a co-ordinated attempt at starting to explore the purpose, value and contribution of community development practice in Northern Ireland. The Framework will help instil confidence for those directly involved in community development, by seeking to create a strong rationale around its significance. It will also help challenge those directly involved in it to develop and deliver practice which is grounded in core values and principles of community development. It will provide a greater understanding and appreciation of community development for those who can invest in it. It will also help assist policy makers in highlighting the value of community development by demonstrating how it is relevant within a range of policy arenas and how it contributes to a range of key Government priorities.

Community development has made an important contribution to Northern Ireland in helping to achieve political stability; in motivating and empowering communities; in reaching the most marginalised and excluded within society; in communities becoming more active partners in governance and in tackling poverty and disadvantage. Community development practice has evolved considerably in recent years with a dramatic increase in local community-based activity. There has been considerable investment in community development, with a broad and varied infrastructure of support for local communities throughout Northern Ireland at regional, sub regional and local levels.

The concept of a Framework has originated and been progressed by those directly involved in community development. Critical to this process have been the foresight, commitment and leadership demonstrated by the voluntary and community sector in reaching this stage. The process has been important in bringing together so many individuals and organisations, at local and regional level, who all share a common belief and passion for community development.

From the outset of this initiative, it was unanimous that the Framework itself should be viewed as an important part of a process rather than being the end result. It is important that the Framework forms a solid foundation, enabling community development to move forward with confidence and continue to play an integral role in creating a positive future for Northern Ireland.
Background

The strength and credibility of this Framework was highly dependent on the process adopted in its development. From the outset, an emphasis was placed on bringing together a steering group comprising of representatives from key Government Departments, statutory agencies and key organisations within the voluntary and community sector. This provided the expertise, support and direction needed for taking the initiative forward.

Engagement with a broad audience was also critical and a series of regional workshops provided the scope to seek the views of a wide range of participants. These included voluntary activists and a wide range of paid community development practitioners working across many different disciplines from all sectors. This process helped affirm an appetite to create this Framework, shaped its content and sought agreement on the potential impact that such a document might bring.

Community development practitioners (paid and unpaid) shared a broad range of expectations of the Framework. Some of these reflections are detailed below.

- To help legitimise community development, dispel mistrust and reaffirm good practice
- To recognise good practice within the sector and help challenge sub standard practice
- To recognize, celebrate and show case volunteer involvement and commitment
- To bring some structure to a sector which is too fragmented
- To help empower the sector which is currently undervalued by Government
- To capture the importance and contribution of community development
- To help clarify language used within community development
- To promote acceptance and understanding of values and principles of community development practice.

‘Despite all the good work and investment, we have failed to clearly articulate or convince others about the value, contribution and benefits of community development in Northern Ireland.’ (Practitioner)

It is important that this Framework compliments other current and past attempts to achieve similar linked objectives. It will seek to take cognisance of other key policy developments impacting upon community development in Northern Ireland. The Framework will also attempt to provide some focus on the key challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for community development practice in Northern Ireland.
This Framework is about challenging everyone involved in community development to reflect honestly and independently on how community development practice can be maximised for the benefit of all local communities.
What is Community Development?

Community development can often risk being theorised and over complicated, as it is the actual practice which is undoubtedly more significant. There are, however, inextricable links between the quality of practice and the body of knowledge which informs it. The Framework, therefore, will attempt to strike a balance between providing a strong theoretical base, but with a particular focus on linking this to practice.

This Framework adheres to the definition put forward in the Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)\(^1\), which was informed by a consultative process involving community development practitioners (paid and unpaid) from Northern Ireland.

Community Development is a long-term value based process which aims to address imbalance in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion.

The process enables people to work together to:

- Identify their own needs and aspirations
- Take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives
- Improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live, and the societies of which they are a part.

Effective community development is underpinned by values and principles. In summary, these include (include footnote to direct people to centre pages):

- **Equality and Anti-discrimination**: Practice which challenges the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups
- **Social Justice**: Practice which strives towards the long term goal of a more equal, inclusive and non sectarian society
- **Collective Action**: Practice which encourages communities to come together with a view to organise, influence and take action

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\(^1\) Full version of Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)
Summary version of Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)
http://www.fcdl.org.uk/NOS_Consultation/Documents/CD%20NOS%202009%20summary%204%20pages.pdf
• **Community Empowerment:** Practice which instils confidence amongst individuals to define themselves, their priorities and agendas for action

• **Working and Learning Together:** Practice which values and promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, experience and diversity within communities to collectively bring about change

*(Note: There will be a reference here made to the centre pages which will essentially be the flow diagram in separate attachment – this shows the relationship and flow between the definition, values and principles as per Community Development National Occupational Standards)*

**Context**

Community development is a unique approach to working. It risks becoming consumed or diluted by other approaches. Community planning, community participation, community service delivery, community consultation and community empowerment are often perceived as being the ‘same thing’ as community development. There are undoubtedly parallels and similarities both in theory and practice across these areas, but community development could be viewed as a much more rounded, purposeful and meaningful approach.

Community development takes place in a context of social, demographic, economic, environmental and political change. Communities should not be seen as static or homogenous. They are defined not just by geography, but by identity and interest. It is natural for people to belong to different communities. Each community will have a unique set of needs and issues, influenced by a complex set of external factors. Effective community development practice should take account of and respond to these specific needs, issues and concerns.

Community development has increasingly become a vehicle by which public authorities, services and agencies are enabled to better understand, engage with and respond to communities needs\(^2\). Community development has an important function in providing a critical voice to statutory agencies and elected representatives.

The role and contribution of local voluntary activists is fundamental to community development. There is also a rich tapestry of skilled and trained paid practitioners involved in community development and it is important to recognise this occupational area. Viewing it solely as a “profession” however, risks excluding voluntary activists and

\(^2\) The Community Development Challenge
those who use community development in the context of other professions (e.g. health, housing, sports, education, youth etc). This is explored further in section four.

Process

The quality of the process is integral to effective community development. It can often be challenging, yet it should never be compromised. The process should always strive to reflect the values and principles which underpin it. Any deviation from these values will only serve to dilute the quality of the practice and negate the potential of a positive outcome.

“Whatever you do community development, the core purpose, ethics and values don’t change – only the context.” (Practitioner)

It should always be possible to link areas of practice to at least some of these core values. The ability to do so will always vary depending on the nature and context of the work but it should nonetheless be core to the practice.

Those involved in community development retain a core sense of passion and commitment to the communities in which they operate. A main tenet of community development practice is for the practitioner to be an ‘enabler’ and ‘facilitator’, not a leader.

Community development practice works with communities to determine their own agendas and to take action to meet their own identified needs. It is about developing and delivering programmes that empower individuals and groups to find solutions and approaches to their own challenges. The process should be sympathetic to the social, demographic, economic, environmental and political climate, as it is not a linear process and should have the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

The term ‘asset-based’ is increasingly being used by those working in community development to emphasise the positive social aspects of a community without overly focusing on negative aspects. Assets in this regard refer not only to physical assets such as land and buildings but to the wealth of knowledge, skills, experience and social networks that can help address the priorities and needs of the community. Figure one explores this further.

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3 Gabriel Channan Discussion Paper for ‘Making the Case’ community development practitioners forum convened by Community Places
Figure One: Deficit vs Asset Ways of Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deficit approaches</th>
<th>Asset approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start with deficiencies and needs in the community, often as defined by external data about the community</td>
<td>Start with the assets in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to problems</td>
<td>Identify opportunities and strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide services to Users</td>
<td>Invest in people as citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise the role of Agencies</td>
<td>Emphasise the role of civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on individuals</td>
<td>Focus on communities/neighbourhoods and the common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See people as clients and consumers receiving services</td>
<td>See people as citizens and co-producers with something to offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat people as passive and done-to</td>
<td>Help people take control of their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix people</td>
<td>Support people to develop their potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement programmes as the answer</td>
<td>See people as the answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study

Oasis is a community organisation which is based in East Belfast. They participated in the “Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership” initiative and is currently working with the local pharmacy to develop specific health projects with men and women in the local community. The project aimed to look at positive mental health and participants were encouraged to understand the correlation with good physical health. The pharmacist reported that participants became more confident and he was able to ask more questions and interact with the group. This has led to lifestyle changes such as increased motivation, an active interest in other courses and the development of new friendships. There has also been a change in thinking patterns, goals and expectations with the group taking significant steps to improve their physical and mental health.

7 Case Study from Community Development & Health Network Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
Benefits and Outcomes

The biggest challenge for those involved in community development is to clearly articulate the impact of interventions. Community development provides a multitude of benefits, both for the individuals involved and the wider community. These are often difficult to identify or isolate, which presents a challenge to community development practitioners who need to provide evidence of positive change to support their practice.

This issue is exacerbated by the long term nature of community development, which is sometimes at odds with the short term nature of supported interventions. Quantifying the impact on broader aims and objectives can be difficult, so ambitious is the nature of what community development is attempting to address. Funders and policy makers are tempted to prescribe the results they want, but this is to treat community development as if it was a simple top-down process like other forms of public provision – forms of provision which have not worked well without a community development component.  

“Community development is cost driven rather than value driven – we need to start to challenge and address this.” (Practitioner)

Community development is a process informed by a set of skills and knowledge which supports all section of communities in articulating their needs, building trust, building people’s resilience in difficult times, building bridges across communities and making communities more inclusive. It is essential to help overcome poverty and exclusion but it is also fundamental to the wellbeing of all sections of the community. It is about helping residents and public agencies to work together to achieve better quality of life for all. Community development reaches and supports the disadvantaged, socially excluded, non voters, disengaged and those experiencing the highest level of poverty. It is clear that community development builds social capital by supporting and developing groups, community and voluntary associations, and networks; promoting collective action and co-operation; and facilitating participation and inclusion.

There are inextricable links between community development, good relations and peace building. Community development has made an important contribution in achieving and maintaining political stability in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, decades of practice have shown that community development can help achieve community cohesion and build bridges between communities.

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8 Community Development Challenge  

9 Community Development Challenge  

10 Social Capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them  
http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/policy/lilp/New_Trends_Com_Dev.pdf

12 http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/policy/lilp/New_Trends_Com_Dev.pdf
The role of community development and its related outcomes are detailed further in Figure Two.

**Case Study**

Local women from a small rural community in Co Tyrone approached Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network (NIRWN) to support them develop a specific women’s group for their area. NIRWN provided a host of opportunities which allowed the group to develop knowledge, skills and capacity across a range of areas including advice on developing their constitution; committee roles and responsibilities; AGM support; funding advice and facilitating networking opportunities with other women’s groups. Training was tailored and delivered in response to the specific needs identified by the group. The group now has the ability to bring forward its own plans but also has the benefits of a clear support mechanism via NIRWN.

**Case Study**

Ulster GAA’s Club Officer Training Programme is rolled out annually and is designed to build the capacity of Club Officers. It uses seminars, workshops, talks, hand-outs and discussions to provide Club Officers with essential information, advice and guidance. Those attending include both experienced and newly-elected Officers and they have the opportunity to explore key issues and share experience. The Volunteer Development Programme meanwhile aims to increase GAA members’ capacity across a number of areas including coaching, health and wellbeing, community development, high performance, governance and inclusion issues.

**Case Study**

Fivemiletown Regeneration Partnership was concerned with the lack of participation from young people in their community. They approached YouthAction NI to support them in attempting to engage with more young people. A programme of activities was put in place to enthuse young people and help build relationships between the Partnership and the young people. There was a number of successful outcomes including increased trust between young people and community representatives, improved confidence and skills amongst young people to engage with the Partnership and increased confidence within the Partnership in approaching and working with young people. One member of the Partnership reported that ‘through the project young people have developed a pride in their community and have realised that the Regeneration Partnership care greatly about young people in the area and, as a result, the young people have an outlet to help shape the future of their community.

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13 Case Study from Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network and Women’s Resource & Development Agency Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
14 Case Study from Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
15 Case Study from Youth Action NI Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
Figure Two: Role & Outcomes of Community Development

Community Development consists of six progressive components. These follow on from each other, building up a combined effect. Additionally each stage has authentic outcomes of its own. Only community development pursues the whole process through its six components.\textsuperscript{16}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Community Development</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Help people see that they have common concerns about local or other public issues and can benefit from working together | • Reduction of isolation and alienation  
• Increase in social capital and co-operation |
| 2. Help people to work together on those issues, often by forming or developing an independent community group, supporting them to plan and take actions and encouraging evaluation and reflection as a way of improving effectiveness | • Creation or improvement of bona-fide community groups  
• Increase opportunities for activity in the community  
• More effective community activity |
| 3. Support and develop independent groups across the community sector non-directively but within an ethical framework, and increase networking between groups | Increase in:  
• Community sector  
• Volunteering  
• Mutual aid and autonomous services  
• Learning between groups  
• Improvement in conditions in the locality |
| 4. Promote values of equity, inclusiveness, participation and co-operation throughout this work | Increase in:  
• Participation  
• Social capital  
• Co-operation  
• Community cohesion |
| 5. Empower people and their organisations to influence and transform public policies and services and all factors affecting the conditions of their lives | • Community engagement and influence  
Improvement in:  
• Dialogue between community and authorities  
• Coherence and effectiveness of public policies |
| 6. Advise and inform public authorities on community perspectives and assist them to strengthen communities and work in genuine partnership with them | • Increased capacity of agencies, authorities and professions to engage with communities  
• Improvement in delivery of public services  
• Increased resources for the community sector |

\textsuperscript{16} Community Development Challenge  
Community Development – who is doing it?

It is important to reflect on who is actually involved in community development.

Voluntary Activists

“There needs to be a greater parity of esteem between the role of paid practitioners and volunteers.” (practitioner)

There would be no place, need or purpose for a community development support infrastructure, was it not for the passion, commitment and endeavor of voluntary activists involved in community development. Volunteers are integral to achieving the aims which the process of community development seeks to realise. Volunteering is one of the main conduits through which the values and principles of community development can be implemented. The long term benefits of community development work are not possible without the engagement of local people who are experts in the social problems and needs of their own communities.¹⁷

“Volunteers are as equally professional in their ‘role’ – many bring skills and experience from other roles they have.” (Practitioner)

In the last State of the Sector Survey there were 15,901 volunteers in the sub sector of community development. This equates to six volunteers to every staff member in the community development sub sector.¹⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Ratio of staff to volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>26,737</td>
<td>87,723</td>
<td>1: 3 (.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Sub Sector</td>
<td>2,597</td>
<td>15,109</td>
<td>1: 6 (5.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: NICVA 2010- State of the Sector V)

“Paid workers are a huge part of this but it is always local volunteers that will drive this forward.” (Practitioner)

Volunteering can empower people and communities to fulfill their potential and contribute to social change. It can also engender a greater sense of ownership of

¹⁷ Volunteer Now Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
¹⁸ Volunteer Now Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
‘bettering’ their community. Local people hold the insight and knowledge of local issues which is useful when planning programmes of work with paid practitioners.\(^{19}\)

**Figure Three: Skills and Qualities of Community Development Practitioners\(^{20}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding of:</th>
<th>Skills required are:</th>
<th>Behaviour/s (attitude/s) needed are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The community, gained from talking and listening to local people</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>A commitment to translating community development values and principles into practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The context for the community – specific historical, political, cultural, social and economic issues</td>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Flexibility – to be able to adapt to a range of changing scenarios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community Development process, practice and principles</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Creativity – to work with a community to find different and flexible solutions to the challenges they face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation/encouragement</td>
<td>Resilience – community development is not a smooth or linear process, so a community development worker must be prepared to manage setbacks and encourage a community to overcome barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political awareness/astuteness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Is this Framework part of professionalising community development? We need to be cautious around this.” (Practitioner)

This was a key concern raised throughout the process. This Framework is not about excluding people from community development or setting a set of unrealistic standards. It is however about creating a common sense of quality and purpose within community development practice.

“Volunteering makes all of our lives better – it is in all our interests to embed a robust culture of volunteering in Northern Ireland. It is essential that we continue

\(^{19}\) Volunteer Now Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)

\(^{20}\) National Strategic Framework for Community Development for Wales
to nurture and realise the capacity and capability that exists, making it easier for people to contribute their time and views in creating the kind of society in which they want to live.” (Nelson Mc Causland, Minister for Social Development, Volunteering Strategy for NI – 2011)

Paid Practitioners

The development of the revised Community Development National Occupational Standards is a useful instrument to highlight to funders and employers that community development is an authentic occupation with approved standards.21

A dynamic and varied community development support infrastructure has developed in Northern Ireland, leading to a greater number of paid practitioners working in the community development “profession”. This has evolved with a range of support from Government departments, public bodies, European Union funding, private donors and philanthropic organisations. There are currently a broad range of community development organisations that operate at a regional, sub regional and local level across Northern Ireland. This organic growth has perhaps lacked some strategic thinking around achieving the optimum infrastructure for supporting community development. This is currently being examined with a view to achieving a more effective infrastructure going forward.

“Employers, funders and policy makers need to recognise the often demanding, challenging and conflict management aspects of the work” (Stress Busters, East Belfast Community Development Agency, 2005)

There has been a notable shift towards community development being adopted as a viable means by which other professions can engage more effectively with communities. This is explored further in section six.

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21 Gabriel Channan & Colin Miller (link to follow)
Achieving Quality and Consistency in Community Development Practice

There was a significant body of opinion expressed during the development of this Framework in relation to a variance in the quality of community development practice in Northern Ireland.

The piecemeal and fragmented investment in community development over recent years has perhaps contributed in part to this. This is in addition to a lack of agreement and guidance on what community development is fundamentally about.

“Because work happens in the community, doesn’t mean it is always good.”
(Practitioner)

Those involved directly in community development, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, all carry a responsibility to develop and deliver practice which is grounded in core values and principles. This requires honest and mature reflection on the core purpose, approach and activities they are concerned with. Failing to do so will only compound the ability of community development to achieve the recognition, acknowledgement and investment it deserves into the future.

“Many organisations have become dependent on grant aid and/or service agreements and contracts for the delivery of services (on behalf of HSC). Whilst this income is essential for mere survival, it does not guarantee the quality of community development practice” (Community Development & Health Network Report, 2011)²²

So how might this framework help assist those who invest in community development?

The framework itself may not provide the only mechanism by which investors determine projects or interventions worthy of support. Each individual investor will always have a set of criteria by which they judge initial applications and progress of existing projects. It may however help formulate new thinking around this criterion. It may also encourage investors to take greater account of the values and principles of community development and align their own criteria more closely to these. This should not lead to any additional bureaucracy or burden upon those making applications, but instead help instil greater confidence and consistency amongst the language used. This will bring benefit to community development, especially in relation to those directly involved in it (paid and unpaid), to those who invest in it and ultimately to communities.

²²Community Development & Health Network, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
Figure Four provides a snapshot of how those who invest in community development might better identify how community development practice relates to the core values.

**Figure Four: Potential Community Development Criterion for Investors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Expectations/Requirements From Investors in Community Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality &amp; Anti Discrimination</td>
<td>• Does the organisation represent (or at least make an effort to be representative of) the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Are services/activities that are offered open to all in the area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>• Does the organisation openly challenge and address issues such as racism and sectarianism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the organisation recognise and challenge inequalities and power differences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the organisation challenge the underlying causes, and effects, of structural power imbalances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Action</td>
<td>• Does the organisation promote the active participation of people within communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the organisation recognise and draw upon the wealth of creative and positive resources within communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment</td>
<td>• Does the organisation seek to engage with the local community in to identify needs, set priorities and agree actions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the organisation promote the rights of communities to be consulted, involved in, and influence decision making that affects their lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working &amp; Learning Together</td>
<td>• Does the organisation encourage, promote and facilitate opportunities for learning to take place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Study**

The Ballinderry River Enhancement Project and its partner, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), engaged with Rural Community Network and Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network, to use a community development approach to highlight environmental concerns locally and develop a plan to sustain the integrity of its rural hinterland. Through creative consultation, using the process of appreciative enquiry\(^{24}\), with the range of rural interests in the local community (farmers, businesses, schools and community groups etc), the partnership enabled all parties to understand the significance of the rivers value as a natural resource. In operationalising the plan, a number of lessons emerged including; the value of including all in the community; the importance of planning now for the future sustainability of the river and its rural communities; and the particular role which independent advocates have to play, particularly in communities addressing contentious issues.

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\(^{23}\) Case study taken from Rural Community Network

The Policy Context for Community Development in NI

The role of communities is gaining importance as Government policy is increasingly concerned with the devolution of power and control towards the citizen. There has been a shift from communities being reactively involved in the creation of government programmes to them becoming active partners in governance. The current political landscape in Northern Ireland has changed, creating a new local administration at Stormont which should be more responsive to the needs and issues of local communities. Communities should also be buoyed by the fact they now have a stable administration with which they can engage to affect positive change.

Community Development struggles to find a natural or defined place within Government policy. The role of community development is often overlooked at the higher levels of policy, although there is a wide reliance on its methods at the level of implementation. The sporadic nature of investment in community development from a variety of sources also serves to make clear and effective policy development difficult.

The Department for Social Development currently has primary responsibility for providing key strategic support to the voluntary and community sector. Within this remit, one of their core areas is to support community development. However, there is a clear need for a comprehensive community development strategy within the Department, as without one there is a danger that this can impact on the resources directed towards community development activity going forward.

“There is a need for central co-ordination and leadership in order to embed community development practices across departments, local government and the voluntary and community sector. The Voluntary & Community Unit (of DSD) is best placed to provide this.” (Practitioner)

It is obvious that other Government Departments have a remit or responsibility towards community development. There has been a greater commitment to community development from other Departments and they have provided support in this respect. Figure five provides a snapshot of how community development currently adds value to delivering the priorities of each Government Department.

“There is a need for central co-ordination and leadership in order to embed community development practices across departments, local government and the voluntary and community sector. The Voluntary & Community Unit (of DSD) is best placed to provide this.” (Practitioner)

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25 Community Development Challenge

26 In 2009, the then DSD Minister approved a project to take forward the creation of a ‘Strategy and Policy Framework’ in relation to urban regeneration and community development. This work is currently being revived under the new DSD Minister
Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary and community sector has been at the forefront of community development over the last few decades, filling an earlier vacuum created by the reluctance or inability of statutory agencies at that time to provide the necessary support for local communities.

The best estimate we have for the overall size of the voluntary and community sector is approximately 4,700 active organisations. Only 27% of those however identified themselves as doing 'community development'.

The voluntary and community sector is increasingly viewed as a critical vehicle for delivering government objectives and services, particularly because it is uniquely placed to reach marginalised groups. There has been greater emphasis on creating stronger relationships between Government and the voluntary and community sector. The ‘Concordat’ is the latest agreement between Government and the voluntary and community sector, which lays out the shared vision of working together as social partners to build a participative, peaceful, equitable and inclusive community in Northern Ireland. The Concordat establishes a set of shared commitments on how Government and the sector can work together. This in turn shapes the effective use of resources, including the development of good professional practice and the provision of appropriate accountability on both sides.

More effective partnership arrangements between Government and the voluntary and community sector are welcomed, but there is some concern that government services are being ‘downloaded’ onto small organisations that do not have adequate resources to cope and funding is not being made available to cover core and management costs. Moreover, unstable policy environments, fierce competition with private and statutory providers, and the burden of administrating programmes of service delivery to appropriate standards are problematic. Perhaps most importantly for the future of community development in Northern Ireland, public service delivery may compromise the independence of community and voluntary organisations, damage their campaigning and lobbying role, and enable government to withdraw from providing services they should provide. These concerns merit careful consideration.

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28 http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/policy/lilp/New_Trends_Com_Dev.pdf
30 http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/policy/lilp/New_Trends_Com_Dev.pdf
Statutory Sector

- Local Government

Twenty six local District Councils receive core grant aid support from the Department for Social Development via the community support programme. The aim of this investment is to strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services. Local Councils have also leveraged in additional investment from a range of other sources to support community development activities. This includes support from other Government Departments and the European Union.

“The fact remains that a significant programme of work is needed within councils generally to raise the profile and awareness of what community development is, the value and benefits of it, its contribution to the delivery of councils’ role and services and the contribution it can and does make to building vibrant and sustainable communities.” (RCN Skills & Knowledge Report, 2007)

With the impending Review of Public Administration (RPA), the new local councils will take on greater significance in terms of community development, albeit potentially under the banner of community planning. It is important that the community and voluntary sector is engaged directly in whatever structures are created. Delivery of effective community development support is challenging and should not be seen as the responsibility of one sector. RPA can create more effective collaborative partnerships between the community and statutory sectors and such opportunities should be maximised.

There appears to be continued ambiguity between delivering community services and community development. Community development is more than delivering services. Delivering what “clients” perceive they need does little to stimulate the social networks or leadership that builds the ability of communities to manage change. Belfast City Council is demonstrating great foresight by leading on the development of a specific

31 http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary_and_community/funding_programmes/community_support_prog.htm
community development strategy. It acknowledges that community development activity in the council is wider than Community Services.\textsuperscript{33}

“We engage with citizens and communities through all of our departments in a wide variety of ways. We work with local groups on a huge number of issues including open space, good relations, safety, health development and cleansing.’ (Belfast Community Development Strategy, 2011)

- Public Sector

There is an increasing acceptance amongst public sector bodies about the value and contribution of community development in helping to achieve their core aims and objectives. This has been partly driven by wider policy developments around enhanced engagement with communities.

Over the past couple of decades, there have been concerted efforts to integrate and mainstream community development practice within Health & Social Care, specifically within the area of tackling health inequalities.\textsuperscript{34} Significantly, a new Community Development Strategy (2011) is currently being developed by Health & Social Care Board and Public Health Agency.\textsuperscript{35}

“The Board and Agency see community development as a key instrument to improve health and well being, drive us towards health and social wellbeing equality between different communities and help to ensure the most effective use of the health and social care budget.” (Community Development Strategy for Health & Well Being, 2011).

The purpose of this strategy is to provide guidance and direction on how community development approaches are to be taken forward within health and social care. It is expected that every health and social care agency will incorporate a community development approach into their programmes. This is a strong indicator of the seriousness which community development is being taken within health and this has been widely received.

\textsuperscript{33} Draft version of Belfast Community Development Strategy http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communitysupportplan/docs/draftcommunitydevelopmentstrategy20112014.pdf

\textsuperscript{34} Community Development & Health Network Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)

\textsuperscript{35} Draft version that closed for consultation on 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 2011 http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/Past\%20Consultations/2011\%20Community\%20Development\%20Strategy/index.html#P-1_0
“The Health Minister has made his commitment to tackling health inequalities very clear and the draft commissioning plan from the HSCB and PHA contains the language of community development and engagement. It remains to be seen whether we will see the investment required in developing practice as well as services, which is required to make a lasting impact.” (Community Development & Health Network Report, 2011)

Housing is another area in which the role of community development has grown in significance.

“Housing Executive is committed to empowering communities to have a real voice in matters affecting their home and community and access to capacity building for disadvantaged groups to encourage meaningful participation.” (Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Community Involvement Strategy, 2008-2011)

There are a number of interventions within the remit of NIHE which attempt to achieve this vision. Community Development has an integral role to play in terms of supporting tenants to address issues such as community relations, poverty, community safety and social exclusion, alongside supporting them to engage effectively with other public bodies and service providers.

Within youth work, a community development approach to working with young people is an important element of building social capital and characterised by building relationships between young people themselves and also between community representatives and young people and other key organisations and agencies. Youth work delivered within a community context, underpinned by similar values, recognises that young people have the capacity to affect positive change for themselves and others.

(A diagram here might help better illustrate the various contexts for community development in NI – community development at centre and then a number of strands coming out including health, education etc – to be designed for final version)

36 Community Development & Health Network Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
37 Youth Action Northern Ireland Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
### Figure Five: Relevance & Contribution of Community Development to Government Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Department</th>
<th>Relevant Policy Areas</th>
<th>Application/Benefit of Community Development Approach</th>
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</table>
| Office of First & Deputy First Minister | • Cohesion, Sharing & Integration Strategy  
• Social Investment Fund  
• Social Protection Fund  
• Lifetime Opportunities NI Anti Poverty Strategy | • Promoting the voice of underrepresented groups  
• To promote equality amongst all sections of society  
• Developing innovative approaches to addressing issues of sectarianism and racism |
| Department of Agriculture & Rural Development | • Rural Development Programme  
• Anti Poverty & Social Inclusion Programme Framework  
• Rural White Paper | • To engage more effectively with rural communities, particularly the most excluded and disadvantaged, to identify specific needs and issues  
• To empower rural communities to advocate and lobby to affect positive change within their own communities  
• To build capacity amongst rural dwellers to play an integral role in the development of their own communities  
• To provide the necessary financial support for local rural communities to develop essential services, to create vibrant villages and to create additional employment opportunities |
| Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety | • Investing for Health Strategy  
• Patient & Public Involvement  
• Community Development Strategy (Draft) | • To develop innovative programmes which seek to engage local communities in raising awareness of health related issues, particularly those whom are amongst the biggest users of front line health care services  
• To educate and empower local communities to adopt a healthier lifestyle  
• To address growing problem of inequalities in health |
<p>| Department of Enterprise, Trade &amp; Investment | • Social economy | • To promote, encourage and support the development of the social economy |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Department</th>
<th>Relevant Policy Areas</th>
<th>Application/Benefit of Community Development Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Social Development</td>
<td>• Community Support Programme</td>
<td>• To develop key interventions which seek to support the most excluded and disadvantaged amongst society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Volunteering Strategy</td>
<td>• To empower local communities to engage better with public sector agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Urban Regeneration/Neighbourhood Renewal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Employment &amp; Learning</td>
<td>• Adult &amp; Community Based Education</td>
<td>• To create opportunities for people to advance their personal and professional development through participation in community based educational programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NEETs Strategy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
<td>• Community Safety Policing and Community Safety Partnerships</td>
<td>• To develop and deliver community safety initiatives which best meet the needs of local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• To empower local communities to engage with statutory agencies on issues of community safety and policing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Culture, Arts &amp; Leisure</td>
<td>• Community Festivals Fund</td>
<td>• To deliver arts, cultural and sporting activities which are reflective of the needs of a particular community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Cultural Awareness Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Environment</td>
<td>• Community Planning Review of Public Administration</td>
<td>• To develop capacity of local voluntary activists to engage more effectively in community planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Regional Development</td>
<td>• Transport Shaping Our Future Regional Development Strategy</td>
<td>• To engage more effectively with local communities to develop strategies which are responsive to the needs and issues of local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• To empower local communities to engage with statutory agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>• Youth Work Strategy</td>
<td>• To develop youth work practice which encourages, promotes and facilitates opportunities for young people to become more active citizens within their communities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Early Years Strategy</td>
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(Note: This table needs further developed and we would ask that you give this due consideration in your response, particularly across areas which you have specific interest in.)
Case Study

The Sandy Row Community Forum (SRCF) was established in 1996 and acts as an umbrella organisation for all of the local community groups, bringing together diverse social partners to benefit the area. The Forum has a management committee made up of 20 volunteers and volunteer led projects include After Schools Club, Homework Club, Summer Schemes, youth holiday clubs and neighbourhood watch schemes. The involvement of volunteers helps to empower local communities by building community capacity and building a legacy for Sandy Row. Local residents create reliance on their own community rather than outside groups. They deliver services for themselves and it creates involvement and engagement within the community. It also creates opportunities for residents to meet each other, create networks and develop support systems as well as friendships.

Community Planning

“There is a very strong need for this Framework, particularly in light of RPA and the increasing role of local councils in community development.” (Practitioner)

In 2011, the NI Executive will introduce legislation making Community Planning a statutory responsibility. The legislation will place a duty on local councils to lead the process and on other public bodies to participate and promote Community Planning.

Community Planning is a process whereby councils, statutory bodies, agency bodies and sectors work together to develop and implement a shared vision for promoting the well-being of their area and pave the way for the most efficient use of scarce resources. A truly effective plan must not only identify tasks that need to be completed to realise the shared vision, but must also identify who shall carry them out.

The leadership role for councils is not just about consultation with citizens and communities but making sure there is effective and genuine engagement with citizens. Community Planning has yet to be formally introduced, yet it merits careful consideration in the context of this Framework.

So how does this link to Community Development?

“Community planning, place-shaping, the measurement of the quality of life, and the active involvement of citizens and statutory partners in co-design, co-

38 Case Study from Volunteer Now Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
production and co-delivery can all be greatly enhanced by a clearly articulated community development approach.” (Belfast City Council Community Development Strategy, 2011)

Community planning has a strong resonance with community development and reflects closely on the ethos and values underpinning it. The perceived benefits have particular similarities across key areas of community engagement, participation and empowerment.

“It is community development which will put the community into community planning and enable it to hit the ground running.” (Practitioner)

Community planning will however fail to realise these benefits, should it fail to have a strong community development approach at its core.

“We set great store by community-led planning – however it would be criminal if wave after wave of professionals, still wearing their ‘specialist’ hats, came into communities to urge them to ‘plan their futures.” (Appreciating Assets, 2011).

Community planning is a welcome piece of legislation and the theory behind it is unequivocal. It should however be tempered with caution as it will undoubtedly face many challenges. A strong and robust community planning process can be achieved by:

- Stronger partnership arrangements between statutory and community and voluntary sectors
- Localised community plans which better meet specific needs and issues at grassroots level
- Investment into building capacity of local communities to effectively engage in the process
- Achieving better political relationships at a local level
- More effective and meaningful strategic partnerships which bring together existing partnerships
- Community representation at all levels which needs to be equal to that of other partners
- Community representatives which are elected by and accountable to the wider community
- Community representatives which are elected by and accountable to the wider community
- Decision making processes which are open and transparent
- A set of clear standards for partnerships to operate so that they can be held to account.40

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40 points taken from Brendan Murtagh’s presentation at Community Places Conference in June 2011
Partnerships

Partnerships at local, sub regional and regional levels have always been the norm within community development practice and there are many examples which are testimony to this. The purpose, value and benefits of partnerships are already well documented and do not need repeated in this Framework.

Community Development demands strong and effective partnerships at various levels. Some may be concerned with influencing change at a local level, whilst other activities may be about affecting change at a much broader level. Some may consist wholly of voluntary and community representatives, whilst others may bring together community, statutory and public sector representatives. Regardless of origin and purpose, all partnerships should be equal, inclusive, diverse and accountable. There needs to be careful reflection on who is under represented within current partnership arrangements and every effort made to encourage a broad membership.

Partnerships formed a large part of the discussions during the development of this Framework.

“Too often we are stepping on toes, fighting against each other – this gives us direction based where we want to collectively go. It provides a sense of common purpose.” (Practitioner)

“We need to enhance possibility to work together naturally rather than being forced into it.” (Practitioner)

“There is just so much going on out there...but no one seems to know what the other is doing. This is very confusing for communities.” (Practitioner)

In the context of diminishing resources, it is imperative that everyone who has a part to play in community development begins to explore opportunities for more collaborative working. This will help create more effective support structures which should ultimately be better placed to meet the needs of local communities.

“This framework might assist in terms of increasing partnership working between voluntary and statutory sector.” (Practitioner)

“We need to remove the fear of sharing and ensure more collaborative work.” (Practitioner)

Historically, some relationships between statutory and community and voluntary sectors have not been entirely positive. This has improved in recent years with some positive examples, but there remains much work to be done in creating more effective
partnerships. This will require a greater appreciation of what each sector can offer in terms of resources, knowledge and expertise. This will be particularly true in light of the community planning agenda.

“In an era of partnerships and joint working, the absence to a shared understanding about community development is having a detrimental effect. It has made it more difficult for organisations to identify and share priorities; to target resources efficiently and to measure the success of what they are doing. It’s also made it difficult for organisations to plan and work together to achieve common aims within communities.” (Belfast Community Development Strategy, 2011).

Making such bold moves will demand vision and leadership from all involved. It will require a positive approach which focuses solely on what is best for local communities.

‘Mergers, as a means of rationalization, needs to recognize that the process itself may work if and when those merging have a commitment and willingness to do so.’ (Practitioner)

Despite this attempt to provide a strong rationale for community development, it would be naïve to think that only those in a specific community development role are able to bring about positive change in communities. There are many who may not be directly or publicly involved in community development, but who share common interests across related areas such as empowerment, collective action or social justice. Community development practitioners should appreciate the contribution of others and develop close allies with those who have a pivotal role to play. Failure to capitalise on such relationships will undermine the potential impact on local communities.

“The insistence on a narrow view of Community Development as being the only legitimate means of achieving community empowerment is still prevalent. Such an attitude cripples community development and effectively prevents an open and essential debate about the nature and role of community development in the early part of the 21st century.”

41 Notes of presentation by Colin Miller, Community Development Challenge & Challenging Community Development, at University of the South Bank, 2010
http://www.pacesempowerment.co.uk/pacesempowerment/Publications_files/Ben%20Lee%20presentation.pdf
Participative and Representative Democracy

“It was said that the relationship between community workers and politicians was like the ‘elephant in the room’, ever present but rarely talked about.” (Practitioner)

A recurring theme within this process was the subtle tensions amongst those involved within the profession of community development and elected representatives both at council and assembly level.

“There seems to be mistrust between community development practitioners and politicians – elected representatives see community development as a threat – this framework could help redress this.” (Practitioner)

Whilst there is no robust evidence of this claim, there appears to be some anecdotal evidence to support it. Much appears to stem from the confusion around who is actually ‘representing’ the community. Community Development is not about representing communities, which is clearly different from the mandate given to elected representatives which allows them to provide representation. Community Development can however greatly assist representatives to reach deeper and wider into constituencies. Community Development is about helping all parts of the democratic system work to maximum effectiveness by stimulating resident participation and creative joint problem-solving between residents, agencies and political decision-makers.42

“We need to move from representative democracy towards participative democracy.” (Brendan Murtagh, Queen’s University of Belfast)

Enhancing relationships between community development practitioners (paid and unpaid) and elected representatives (local councillors and MLAs) is a key ingredient to support communities to move forward. Both play an integral role in supporting communities and should complement each other in this regard.

There should also be recognition of the legitimacy for the community development process and practitioners to challenge statutory agencies and elected representatives. This should be accepted as a critical function of community development.

42 Taken from Community Places & Gabriel Channan Paper for ‘Making the Case’ practitioners forum
Training and Skills Development

The nature and context for community development is always changing. Community development practitioners require a holistic set of knowledge, skills and attributes.

The development of the revised Community Development National Occupational Standards is a useful instrument to highlight to funders and employers that community development is an authentic occupation with approved standards. Those within the profession are frustrated by an historic lack of appreciation for the multiplicity of skills which community development practitioners offer.

“Employers, funders and policy makers need to recognise the often demanding, challenging and conflict management aspects of the work.” (Stress Busters, East Belfast Community Development Agency, 2005)

There is increasing demands placed upon everyone involved in community development with regard to ensuring accountability and sustainability. There is also an increasing emphasis within Government policy on engaging with communities and for devolving more powers to them. With this enhanced agenda for participation, those involved in community development will require more sophisticated skills and knowledge. Therefore consideration must be given to how practitioners (paid and unpaid) are supported and afforded opportunities to develop a more comprehensive skills set for community development.

“Community development is about challenging inequality and disadvantage and improving the quality of people’s lives. Given that, workers and groups engaging in community development should be supported, equipped and encouraged – not isolated, demoralized and overburdened.” (Who supports you? Summary report of seminar, Rural Community Network, 2001)

• Volunteers

“We need to recognise that it is a different set of skills that are needed now for voluntary groups, which may not have been the case in other years.” (Practitioner)

Within the current community development infrastructure, there is a greater emphasis on providing support for voluntary activists. This support can be broad ranging, from ad hoc advice and guidance to more structured accredited and non accredited training. Some organisations currently deliver specific accredited community development training, but there is also a host of training opportunities in related areas such as governance; action planning; project management; volunteer management; financial

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43 Gabriel Channan & Colin Miller, source to follow
management, fundraising and lobbying. This training should always strive to take account of the respective needs and issues facing the volunteer. Such training is invaluable in developing core skills and instills confidence within communities which will allow them to engage more effectively in the community development process.

“I now have a better understanding of how community development fits into a context I am familiar with and the groups I am involved in.” (Practitioner)

- **Paid Practitioners**

Within the context of this framework, it is important to give credence to the scope and availability of education and accredited training in community development within Northern Ireland. This is an important measure of the opportunities available to those wishing to enter this occupational area or for those hoping to progress within it.

“There is a lot of good and sophisticated work going on and skills and knowledge built among workers and organisations. However, some of this is short term and almost accidental. Long term support structures should be maintained, linked to ongoing policy, practice and monitoring systems.” (Fitzduff & Mc Cartney, 2007)

There has not been a standard or consistent vocational pathway for those involved in community development, with many entering this area of work via a host of other avenues including volunteering, youth work, social work and local political or lobbying work. There is usually some affiliation across what are quite often similar disciplines. There is however an acceptance of the need for a variety of training to develop specific skills and knowledge for community development.

University of Ulster is the only institution in Northern Ireland delivering undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in Community Development. Belfast Metropolitan College also offers an OCN NI Level 2 in Community Development, alongside an important gateway qualification in the Cert HE in Community Development. These courses are especially important as a pathway for unpaid activists who have a wealth of practical experience and who want to pursue a career in community development.

There needs to be continued investment in provision of community development training. This training must reflect the Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)\(^{45}\) and adequately prepare practitioners for working within the field. Similar to practice, training should always be of a high standard, flexible and responsive to changes within the wider political, economic, cultural and environmental climate.

\(^{45}\) Full version of Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)
Summary version of Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009)
http://www.fcdl.org.uk/NOS_Consultation/Documents/CD%20NOS%202009%20summary%204%20pages.pdf
• Managers of Community Development Staff

The dynamic and varied nature of community development practice leads to challenges in ‘managers’ being effective in their support role to practitioners. Those who manage community development practitioners must be sensitive to the obvious tensions and challenges involved in the role. They must also be supportive of practitioners, who perhaps help provide that critical and independent voice in challenging statutory agencies and elected representatives. Community development practice can often be layered with many challenges and there is an expectation of being able to balance the multiplicity of complex issues that are inherent within community development. Managers must be properly equipped with the skills and resources to provide that support to their staff.

Case Study

Community Change offers facilitation and training on a wide range of specialist areas throughout Northern Ireland including organisational, project and strategic planning. Orana is a Children & Family Centre which asked Community Change to provide support and direction on developing a new Strategic Plan. Community Change helped Orana take a subjective look at their services, achievements and learning from experiences. In conjunction with the Director of Oran, Community Change developed an interactive and participatory process which engaged with the voluntary management committee and service users. A Strategic Plan was produced and agreed upon as a result of this process and people were enthused to see their own feedback reflected in the final plan. Community Change provided additional follow up support to Orana with another facilitated session, to operationalise the Strategic Plan into yearly plans with clear targets and objectives.

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46 Case Study from Community Change Report, 2011, commissioned as part of this Framework (link to follow)
Looking Ahead

Embedded within the process of developing this Framework has been a commitment to ensure that as many people as possible who are passionate about community development could make a contribution. The collective approach used in bringing this to fruition is one of the key strengths of the Framework. The steering group provided the necessary support, guidance and direction and the initial seven workshops provided the scope to engage with a wide range of practitioners (paid and unpaid) across NI. The consultation period provided an opportunity for individuals and organisations to provide feedback, while the conference generated much needed discussion around the draft Framework. A number of submissions from various sectoral organisations provided much needed expertise across a range of areas.

A significant comment raised during this process was that:

“The Framework should be a positive document. It should not dwell too much on the challenges. We all know these by now. This should be about putting forward solutions.” (Practitioner)

This helped define the purpose of this Framework. It has encouraged a positive approach both in its development and content. Whilst there are natural concerns about the future role of community development, particularly amidst an already insecure environment, it is also apparent that there are huge opportunities for it to play a more integral role in Government policies.

Typical concerns of community development practitioners can often be about a sense of isolation and a lack of understanding for what they do. There is often frustration about a lack of appreciation for the skills, qualities and attributes that community development practitioners offer. This Framework has been a refreshing experience for those involved in community development. They have been enthused by the opportunity to contribute to something that might help address some of these concerns. They have also been able to detach themselves from their own specific areas of responsibility and have an opportunity to reflect openly and honestly on community development.

It is important to reiterate an earlier point which was about ensuring that this Framework is seen as a starting point rather than an end point. The co-operation demonstrated in developing the Framework across statutory sector, community and voluntary sector and Government Departments has been a key feature which needs to be built upon going forward.
Recommendations

- A cross-departmental policy for Community Development should be developed as part of the Programme for Government.\(^{47}\)

- Government Policy should be more explicit about the role and contribution of community development in delivering key Government targets and priorities.

- There should be greater investment to support different investors in identifying and supporting quality community development practice, which is clearly underpinned by community development values and principles.

- There needs to be a consistent understanding, approach to and investment in community development practice across local Government, which is clearly distinguished from community services and other related functions.

- There should be greater investment in developing opportunities to showcase and share good community development practice across Northern Ireland.

- The definition, values and principles of Community Development National Occupational Standards (2009) should be adopted by Government Departments, statutory agencies, voluntary and community sector and funders as the fundamentals of community development practice in Northern Ireland.

- There needs to more consideration given to developing more long term supported interventions which maximise the impact of the community development process.

(Note: These are only provisional ideas for recommendations and do not reflect the June 2011 workshops, as there was no discussion on possible recommendations at that stage. Any further suggestions are welcome.)

\(^{47}\) This is reflective of ongoing lobbying work by ‘Making the Case Community Development Practitioners forum, which is a group convened by Community Places