

# **STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Standing Conference for Community Development

SCCD is a membership organisation bringing together those involved in community development practice, policy and research. SCCD has members in the community, voluntary, public and private sectors. We receive financial support from the Active Community Unit at the Home Office. For further information please contact:

SCCD, Floor 4, Furnival House, 48 Furnival Gate, Sheffield, S1 4QP  
Tel: 0114 270 1718 Fax: 0114 276 7496  
E-mail: [admin@sccd.org.uk](mailto:admin@sccd.org.uk) Web: [www.sccd.org.uk](http://www.sccd.org.uk)

Registered charity number: 1085702

This Framework has been endorsed by the following organisations:

Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland  
Community Development Foundation  
Local Government Association

We particularly wish to acknowledge the support provided by Liverpool City Council for the Conference which initiated the work on the Framework.

Support for the publication and dissemination of the Framework has been provided by the Community Development Foundation and Unity Trust Bank.

*Published May 2001*

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# **A Strategic Framework for Community Development**

## **Introduction**

The aim of this framework is to provide a basis for working with people, not only on issues of local concern but also when developing wider programmes and policies. All too often external experts seem to have more influence over change in communities and the development of policies and priorities. The result is a development process that is unsustainable, unfair, of little relevance to those directly affected and which fails to make the best use of available resources, experience and skills. This framework is about a different approach. It is about working with communities first and recognising their interests, expertise and experience as the basis for development. It is this approach that will result in equitable, relevant and sustainable change.

Today many government and other initiatives recognise that, if they are to succeed, the involvement of communities is necessary. However, the starting point for action is often the initiative and not communities themselves. This can result in disjointed development with people being overwhelmed by the demand to respond to initiatives and take part in increasingly complex organisational arrangements. Community development is a process, which joins up environmental, economic, social, demographic, technological, political and other issues by empowering communities to work on their own agendas to improve the quality of life. It has clear values and commitments as its starting point rather than predetermined structures and solutions.

This framework outlines the main elements for effective community development. It provides a tool to analyse current contexts and practice. It can be used with people to develop strategic options and make strategic choices about future direction.

The framework has been produced with members of the Standing Conference for Community Development (SCCD). There have been workshops at conferences organised by SCCD and by our members to produce and comment on material for the Framework. There has been feedback on the draft that was circulated through SCCD News and placed on relevant web sites. Members of SCCD have provided case studies. A small group including staff from SCCD, the Community Development Foundation, the Federation for Community Work Training Groups and COGS worked with the material from members to produce sections of the Framework.

## What is community development?

Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. Community workers support individuals, groups and organisations in this process on the basis of the following values and commitments:

### Values

**Social Justice** – enabling people to claim their human rights, meet their needs and have greater control over the decision-making processes which affect their lives.

**Participation** – facilitating democratic involvement by people in the issues which affect their lives based on full citizenship, autonomy, and shared power, skills, knowledge and experience.

**Equality** – challenging the attitudes of individuals, and the practices of institutions and society, which discriminate against and marginalise people.

**Learning** – recognising the skills, knowledge and expertise that people contribute and develop by taking action to tackle social, economic, political and environmental problems.

**Co-operation** – working together to identify and implement action, based on mutual respect of diverse cultures and contributions.

### Commitments

**Challenging** discrimination and oppressive practices within organisations, institutions and communities.

**Developing** practice and policy that protects the environment.

**Encouraging** networking and connections between communities and organisations.

**Ensuring** access and choice for all groups and individuals within society.

**Influencing** policy and programmes from the perspective of communities.

**Prioritising** the issues of concern to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

**Promoting** social change that is long-term and sustainable.

**Reversing** inequality and the imbalance of power relationships in society.

**Supporting** community led collective action.

## What is...?

**Community** is the web of personal relationships, groups, networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour that exist amongst those who share physical neighbourhoods, socio-economic conditions or common understandings and interests.

**Community workers** undertake community development as their main role. They work in accordance with recognised occupational standards. They may focus on specific issues with communities, e.g. health, or have a generic brief.

**Community activists** are people who are active on a voluntary basis in the development of their communities.

**Community groups and organisations** are located within communities of geography or interest. They are controlled by their users and are usually small and informal with no paid staff. They are often referred to collectively as the community sector.

**Community capacity building** supports individuals, groups and organisations to enable them to play a part in the regeneration of communities. It is about building skills and competencies and is increasingly being used amongst policy makers and managers to increase their understanding of communities.

**Community involvement** is about involvement in community activities in a variety of different ways. Community involvement often starts with agendas and programmes that originate outside the community.

**Community participation** is about enabling people to become active partners in the regeneration of communities by contributing and sharing in the decisions that affect their lives. Participation should enable people to have a degree of power and control in the processes with which they are involved.

**Community enterprise** combines community-led action with business activities aimed at economic development and social gain. Community enterprises have explicit social aims and are accountable to their communities. They are independent but work in partnership with others.

**Social entrepreneurs** are individuals who initiate ideas and activities in communities but not necessarily with reference to existing traditions, activities and relationships.

**Partnerships** are structures that exist to deliver programmes. They bring together a number of formal organisations, for example statutory authorities, private companies and voluntary organisations. It has been unusual for community sector groups and organisations to be represented, although there are now attempts to include community interests.

**Stakeholders** are groups and organisations with an interest (stake) in what happens with a project, programme or development.

## **Understanding and Recognition of Community Development and its Role**

Community development is undertaken with communities of place, identity and common interest. This includes communities based on faith, those with a shared culture or heritage, users of public and other services, those with common interests arising from their work, and people working together to promote the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Community development takes place in a context of social, demographic, technological, economic, environmental, political and other change. These changes have global, European, national, regional and local dimensions. Communities initiate changes and through networking have wider influence. There are also changes which are not initiated by communities that present both threats and opportunities. The community development process works with communities to analyse, initiate and influence social change.

If community development is to fulfil its potential it is important that its role in achieving equal opportunities, accessibility, participation in democratic processes and sustainable economic, social and environmental change is recognised. These themes are important across government and within the private and voluntary sectors. Organisations in all sectors can provide crucial support to community development, for example by adopting this framework and ensuring that it applies in all the work of their organisation.

A community development approach starts with people in communities coming together to address these themes. It supports the connections that exist between them and the fact that individuals, groups and organisations need to learn from each other and co-operate if consistent and sustainable change is to be achieved. Community development spans the traditional boundaries of organisations in a way which is flexible and responsive to the priorities and concerns of communities.

This does not mean that communities can do everything or that the resources of statutory, private and voluntary organisations are no longer required to achieve change. A community development approach does mean that government and organisations in the private and voluntary sectors will:

- Act on the basis of the values and commitments of community development
- Support action by community groups and organisations, community businesses and neighbourhood councils
- Have clear processes which enable communities to influence their policies, programmes and priorities
- Recognise the right of communities to propose alternative courses of action
- Value different types and levels of participation

- Build local, regional and national strategy through dialogue with people and organisations active in communities
- Recognise the function of community development and allocate resources to it in their strategies
- Recognise the resources, information and support required by community representatives and organisations when working in partnerships
- Change working practices and time scales to enable participation by communities

In addition government should take account of the above factors in the development of legislation, regulations and guidance.

### **Community Development and asylum seekers**

Many asylum seekers form refugee community organisations to offer advice and support to others seeking asylum. Community Workers have provided information on services available to asylum seekers translated into relevant languages, have assisted with the development of organisations including funding applications, networking with relevant agencies and with the development of services such as English classes. Local Authority wide meetings have been organised to take up issues affecting a number of groups with the local statutory agencies.

### **Community Child Protection Training**

Child protection training for community activists was identified as a priority need during a series of public workshops. As a result a member of staff assisted in establishing a Childcare Training partnership involving community, voluntary and statutory agencies.

Potential trainers were then identified from both the community and statutory sectors and appropriately trained. Child protection awareness sessions were then delivered jointly by community and statutory sector trainers in accessible venues.

Large numbers of community groups (70) and community representatives (400) were targeted and took part in this initiative. The community and statutory sectors learned from each other throughout the process and ensured best use of their limited resources.

*From Policy to Practice published by Community Development and Health Network, Northern Ireland.*

### **Rural transport initiative**

People living in villages around a market town were having difficulties gaining access to local services and employment opportunities because of poor transport links and the expense of running a car. The field officer for the local rural community council recognised the problem from conversations and a recent series of consultation meetings about the regeneration of the area. She worked with individuals in each of the villages to assess the travelling needs of local residents, and advised them on how to set up a voluntary group. She helped them to draw up a proposal to run a flexible transport service. They simultaneously attempted to persuade the bus company to reinstate the route which would enable people to get into town at least once a day. When this failed the residents decided to form a limited company with charitable status to purchase their own minibus. They attracted funding to train and employ a local woman as a driver, and the minibus is also made available for private hire. A car share scheme is also being developed.

### **Regeneration in the Amman and Swansea Valleys**

Amman Valley Enterprise acts as a catalyst to assist people to think in enterprising terms and with a community perspective. Accessible adult education and training opportunities support personal development, participation and employment resulting in social, economic and environmental regeneration. For example Artworks involves some of the most marginalised individuals and groups and offers an opportunity to develop skills in music, photography and video including editing and recording. Staff employed by the project, and a trainee, go to groups, clubs and schools to provide music workshops.

## **Processes**

Community development processes enable people to work together around common issues and aspirations. This includes people coming together to pursue an activity for its own sake, developing organisations which provide services, participation in partnerships including management responsibilities, and involvement in broader movements to achieve social change.

Community workers employed by statutory agencies, voluntary associations and occasionally by community groups themselves support community development. They work with individuals, groups and institutions in ways which enhance learning, participation, and democratic decision-making. They enable communities to establish and develop networks and more formal types of collective organisation.

## **Empowerment**

Community development does not seek to impose solutions or structures, or to provide services or events *for* people. Rather it is about working *with* people to define and deal with problems, and assert their interests in decision-making. This requires empathy and an ability to engage with individuals, working to develop and maintain appropriate forms of

organisation. It may also involve changing existing organisations so that their practices and culture embrace the empowerment of communities. In this process the role of the community worker requires expertise, diplomacy and courage. By helping communities to develop informal networks and formal organisations, the worker will inevitably challenge and re-negotiate existing power relations, seeking to create alliances which are to the advantage of disadvantaged groups

## Learning

Informal education and mutual learning are important aspects of community development. Through their involvement in community groups and activities, people acquire and re-discover talents, skills, knowledge and understanding which enable them to take on new roles and responsibilities. This contributes to life-long learning by creating opportunities for reflection and evaluation of experience, allowing knowledge to be shared through critical dialogue and building confidence amongst people who have neglected or abandoned their formal education at an earlier age. Community development encourages people to overcome those fears, prejudices and attitudes which restrict their participation and limit their self-esteem.

## Democracy

Community development strengthens democratic processes, opening up political debates and procedures to disadvantaged communities. People become more aware of issues which affect their lives, and more determined to take action to address these. This might involve acting as a community representative on local partnerships, or taking on leadership positions in voluntary organisations. It will entail dealing with tensions, tackling stereotypes and assumptions and helping people to identify the things that they have in common, as well as respecting their differences. Community workers are concerned with building consensus amongst diverse partners, and empowering and enabling those who are marginalised and excluded when there are conflicts of interest.

## Outcomes

The process of community development is complex and demanding. Many of the outcomes seem intangible and cannot always be predicted. The Scottish Community Development Centre has developed the ABCD (Achieving Better Community Development) framework for evaluating community development. This framework suggests the following as the outcomes of community development:

<b>Community empowerment</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Personal empowerment	A learning community
Positive action	A fair and just community
Community organising and volunteer support	An active and organised community

Participation and involvement	An influential community
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Quality of life	
Process	Outcome
Community economic development	A shared wealth
Social and service development	A caring community
Community environmental action	A safe and healthy community
Community arts and cultural development	A creative community
Governance and development	A citizens' community

**Source:** Achieving Better Community Development

### Hull DOC (Developing Our Communities)

Hull DOC community workers initially take time getting to know people and their communities, meeting up with people and listening to their own stories about their hopes, aspirations and needs. Each community has different identities and cultures and many factors have an impact on the quality of life and opportunities to influence decision making.

This initial work builds trust, confidence and a sense of value and self worth within communities. It includes outreach to marginalised people so that confidence and learning increase, community networks are strengthened and people feel more able to have a collective voice in decision-making processes. Examples of this work include:

**Community celebrations** –bringing people together to facilitate a community event such as parties, community plays, lunches, poetry workshops.

**Carrying out a participatory appraisal** – involving communities in looking at what is going on in an area and finding ways to collectively improve community life.

**Creative training** – Away days to local colleges, universities and community centres –helping to break down barriers.

**Community information** –developing an interactive web-site with communities.

**Meeting people in their locality** – office bases located in communities providing access, facilities and resources. Workers attend community group meetings.

**Creating an informal local reference group** – so that residents, groups and organisations can

network, raise issues and develop priorities for Hull DOCs work and influence it's decision making. This includes nominating people to sit on a Community Chest panel which awards grants to community groups.

“Don't put yourself down they said  
Until you've really tried it.  
We organised our tenants groups  
Sat on committees too  
Then we applied for funding  
For the things we had to do.  
We took our tenants out on trips  
What a difference in the block!  
Who made all this possible?  
It was of course Hull DOC”

*Part of a poem from Gatwick House,  
supported by Hull DOC.*

## **Resources**

Resources are crucial to effective community development. While the involvement of community activists and volunteers is unpaid, the process of community development has to be supported by funding, staffing, information and a range of other resources. It is important that these resources are accessible and allocated on a basis that is secure, equitable and transparent.

### **Funding**

Community development requires several types of funding. Generic community development should be funded on a long- term basis from mainstream sources. Ideally community work posts should be placed on an agency's establishment rather than being funded through short term contracts. Funding of specialist posts related to social care, health, education, regeneration, planning, the environment, culture and recreation should be co-ordinated and relate to overall community development strategies.

For many community groups and organisations long term core funding is required. Easy access to smaller sums of money for specific projects is often useful too. The Local Authority can play a key part in helping groups to access funds from other sources by providing information and, when necessary, match funds. Specialist funders such as the Health Service have an important role, for example by supporting community groups with specific interests and supporting service user groups.

There are many programmes providing project funds for specific initiatives and pump priming funds for small developments. However, the distribution of these funds is not necessarily related to social need. The introduction of specific funds should be preceded by an analysis of need and consultation with potential beneficiaries. Mechanisms to monitor the overall distribution of funds and include communities in setting priorities are also necessary.

Better and more accessible information and advice about funding sources and the availability

of support are important if community organisations are to access funding. Simple application procedures, quick decisions and funding in advance and not in arrears are all important. It is not helpful when funds for small initiatives require match funding as this can result in a disproportionate amount of time being spent on making applications and producing accounts.

Research suggests that take up and use of funds improves when there is a development worker supporting groups in applying for and managing resources.

## **Staffing**

In the recent past community development has suffered from an insufficient number of posts designed to provide general support to community activity- it is usually easier to obtain funding for specialist posts. Yet the evidence is that if general support work is not undertaken, then community participation will be weak. It is the combination of generic community workers with the availability of specialist staff that produces the best results. Experienced staff with knowledge of community development are also required within the management, policy and programming functions of organisations.

People active in communities on a voluntary basis make an essential contribution to community development. It is important that this is recognised, that obstacles to participation are removed and that people involved voluntarily have opportunities for support, training and development. This could lead to opportunities to achieve accreditation and join the paid staff.

## **Information**

Crucial for community groups and community workers is the ability to access information from government and other organisations that is clear, jargon free and available in relevant places, formats and languages. It can also be provided by telephone and on web sites with links to other related sites.

The information needed is about particular neighbourhoods and communities of interest that is available from the census and other sources. Information about policies and practice that have worked, and to enable contact with other groups working on similar issues is also useful.

## **Other resources**

Community development requires the use of a range of other resources. These include buildings, information communications technology, media, stationery, design and printing, insurance, recruitment and equipment. Advice and assistance with matters such as budgeting, employment, accounting, law, and marketing may also be necessary. In many cases it is possible to open up and share resources that already exist. Purchasing consortia can bring the benefits of discounted prices to small organisations. Recycling and supply by community businesses can also be cost effective ways of resourcing community development.

<b>Resources for community development in Durham</b>
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Durham County Council has a community development strategy based on a policy commitment to four inter-related themes:

- Improving community governance
- Tackling social exclusion
- Improving partnerships
- Building community capacity

The strategy explains the themes and links them to an action plan. Priority is given to

communities in greatest need. In the section on capacity building, the Local Authority recognises the resource problems facing community groups due to the lack of a clear framework for communities to access consistent help.

The strategy is committed to developing guidance and processes on funding and technical support for community groups. A new community development team has also been established which links with the Council's political modernisation and the formation of local Member Area Panels. Staff in the team will provide the link between local communities and elected Members in their new community leadership role.

### **The Bradford Community Statistics Project**

The project makes use of new technological developments to present local area statistics in ways that enable local communities to have access to accurate evidence from officially recognised sources. Apart from identifying the sites of public services the user can select statistics for areas such as electoral wards or areas of at least 500 addresses which they choose. The statistical data, its presentation for small areas, and the community development support to understand and access the data, will all allow a rich understanding of local conditions by many more people than at present.

## **Evaluation and dissemination**

Evaluation and dissemination are about learning from practice and sharing this with others. They are fundamental to community development because of the role they can play in empowering communities and contributing to social change.

### **Evaluation**

Community development has measurable outputs (for example an information service, a playscheme, a community plan) and outcomes (for example an information service may empower people to claim their rights, a playscheme can enable children to meet new friends, a community plan can result in more public resources being allocated to the priorities of excluded groups). These goals need to be planned for and evaluated. There should be an understanding of all the resources available and contributing, the processes and activities and the anticipated achievements and outcomes.

Evaluation helps to assess the effectiveness of community development projects,

programmes and policies, and why they are or are not successful. It should be a continuous process so that experience effectively informs future planning and development. It is not something to be left until the end but should be undertaken from the beginning. Evaluation is not the same as routine monitoring or performance management. It focuses on the broader picture i.e. the contribution

to meeting long term objectives, and the reasons why achievements or difficulties happen.

Evaluation should have the values and commitments of community development at its heart. It should be a participative process in which measures and indicators are relevant to, and produced with the communities concerned. It should be an empowering experience with all those involved having their say in setting the criteria and analysing the findings.

Applying the values of community development to evaluation helps ensure that it is:

- Integral to community development
- Empowering
- Part of a learning and participative process
- Relevant to and understood by the communities concerned

Evaluation should:

- Be a continuous process which is a tool to assist planning and development rather than just reviewing the impact of a particular initiative or strategy 'after the event'
- Involve all 'stakeholders' and help to answer the questions which are significant to them
- Be imaginative and creative, enabling and encouraging all involved to fully participate
- Be part of accountability to the wider community
- Challenge discriminatory and oppressive policies and practice and seek to overcome inequality and disadvantage
- Highlight and celebrate successes and achievements as well as exploring weaknesses and difficulties
- Have sufficient resources allocated (including time and money) to be effective
- Have planned processes for disseminating what has been learnt both within communities and more widely

## Dissemination

Dissemination is about sharing learning from experience more widely. It is an opportunity to record and celebrate what has been achieved as well as highlighting issues that might be approached in a different way in future. No two communities, or situations, are the same so examples of work disseminated cannot simply be replicated elsewhere. The dissemination of community development experience can, however, be a valuable source of ideas, insights and issues that need to be taken into account by others involved in similar work.

Effective dissemination requires:

- Time and resources
- Production of material in a variety of forms that are attractive and accessible to a wide range of potential users
- Contributions from all those who have been involved in the work
- Acknowledgement of the role played by all stakeholders in achieving change
- Material being made available to all the different audiences (communities, statutory authorities etc.) with a potential interest

### Monitoring and evaluation in Glasgow

A working group was set up to devise a monitoring and evaluation process for community work that could be applied across Glasgow. Making use of material such as Achieving Better Community Development produced by the Scottish Community Development Centre the group produced a package of materials including guidance on process and a framework of indicators and measures to evaluate inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes in terms of changes in community organisations and in the wider community.

The framework is set out in a grid format with each page representing a broad stage in the development of a piece of work: (1) Engaging with Communities; (2) Development of Community Organisation; (3) Building Organisational Strength and Capacity; and (4) Effecting Change. Examples are given of the type of information to gather in relation to each stage.

The package meets the requirements of Best Value and the Departments accountability procedures while at the same time building on existing good practice in community work.

### Community Multi-Media Archive (COMMA)

The Children's Society is pioneering the use of this multi-media archive in its work on participation and

social inclusion across more than 25 projects in England and Wales.

The software is produced by the Storyville co-operative and allows users to create a wide range of digital material and catalogue them in a database. The simplest way to explain the approach is to imagine a traditional card-index system, but instead of merely names, dates, telephone numbers and so on –sound, video, complete documents and still images are stored together with the traditional text and data categories.

This enables young people, community groups, individual residents, agency workers etc to enter their own material into the community's archive –providing both a record and a commentary on issues within that community. No one person or agency's perspective is dominated by another. The complete archive can be searched using the underlying relational database, and copied for distribution –both to those people and groups who have contributed materials, and to decision-makers.

In Partington (Trafford, Manchester) COMMA is being used to document the views of different sections of the community on the regeneration process (“How was it for you?”). The approach is particularly effective in providing a genuine opportunity for children and young people to log their views and aspirations and for community and voluntary groups to ensure that the “official” record of regeneration is not written solely by the big agencies.

## **Learning, training and occupational standards**

People are the main resource for community development. The learning that takes place when people come together to share experience, perspectives, knowledge and skills is crucial to the process of change through community development.

In parallel to this strategic framework the Federation of Community Work Training Groups have developed a strategic framework for community development learning in England. Discussions about similar work are being held in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. They aim to improve the content and quality of training and learning opportunities and increase community development knowledge, understanding and skills of all stakeholders. This framework should be used in conjunction with the frameworks for community development learning.

### **What's in place**

There are many examples of effective community development learning. These include taster courses for people who want to understand the basics of community development, introduction to community work skills courses accredited through the Open College Network, short courses, training the tutor courses, national vocational qualifications and higher education leading to qualifications. A variety of approaches are used including accreditation of learning from previous experience, accessible and flexible training courses, mentoring and exchanges.

To support these learning opportunities community work has had occupational standards for a number of years. These have been used as the basis for the content and endorsement of courses. The standards are relevant for community activists, volunteers, professional

community work staff, staff in other professions who are contributing to the community development process, managers and councillors.

There is a National Training Organisation (PAULO) covering community work and the allied professions of community education, community based adult education and youth work. Endorsement of training courses has been piloted.

A major concern is that learning opportunities at local level can be ad hoc, of limited relevance and not related to the values of community development. Infrastructure support for community development learning could also be better co-ordinated and resourced.

## **Features of community development learning**

Effective community development learning is based on community development values and commitments. A key feature is the value placed on people's experience as the starting point for reflection and analysis. Community development learning aims to create accessible learning opportunities, often within people's communities. An important consideration is how existing resources in schools, colleges and universities can be used more flexibly and adapted for use as part of community development learning. The provision of appropriate learning support, and recognition of previous learning through accreditation are important. Evaluation of learning opportunities with participants is essential if community development learning is to be effective.

## **School pupils and college students**

Many schools and colleges involve pupils and students in activities in their neighbourhood. They often have a variety of other links with communities. It is important that this work is based on community development values and commitments and that pupils and students are introduced to community development as part of the curriculum.

## **Community activists and volunteers**

For many people who left school with no formal qualifications, involvement in community development and community based learning and training can offer appropriate first learning opportunities. The increase in self esteem and self confidence, the reduction in social isolation from being part of a group, and the development of new skills empowers many people to go on to more formal education, training, jobs and to make positive life changes. Involvement in community development can be a significant aspect of life long learning, with people taking on new roles in organising, leading and representing communities.

## **Community workers**

Generic community work is an occupation that requires knowledge, experience and skills. It is based on ethical principles and values. Its role is to build individual confidence and organisational capacity in communities, to make links between communities and work on public policy and programme development. Generic community workers require education and training opportunities and qualifications that recognise this role and are comparable with those available to similar professions.

## **Community development managers**

Community development requires the support and involvement of knowledgeable and experienced managers. There are two reasons for this:

- The inherent tensions faced by workers between the issues and priorities of the communities they are working with and the demands of their employing agencies
- The need for policy, strategy and organisational development to enable community empowerment and support grassroots community development

The policy of government and the demand for local authorities and other organisations to increase community involvement – because this is a key part of Community strategies, Best Value, social inclusion, health improvement and regeneration policies – underlines the importance of having effective community development managers. Learning and development opportunities are therefore crucial for this group of staff.

## **Other professionals and service managers**

Many agencies are seeking ways of improving how they relate to, and work with, communities: economic development, planning, housing, leisure services and health are examples. The majority of staff and managers in these sectors have limited experience and understanding of community development, yet the potential of these staff to contribute more substantively both to the strengthening of communities and to providing services in more appropriate ways is considerable.

This requires dissemination of existing examples of good practice. Professional training and in-service courses should be adapted to include community development. Reading and other material could be produced in order to introduce and develop these staff and managers understanding and skill in applying the values and processes of community development.

## **Elected members**

It is important that politicians have a better understanding of community development. This can be achieved through the contact and dialogue that community groups and community workers have with politicians. An introduction to community development values and processes and the relevant policies of the Local Authority should be included in training courses for councillors.

## **Working together as partners**

Partnerships where community representatives, elected members, managers and staff work together are increasingly important. For partnership working to be effective it should be backed up with opportunities for partners to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding together.

This is a regional programme of learning and training opportunities based on the National Occupational Standards for Community Work. It has several linked components:

- (1) An outreach and development project enabling the effective participation of people active in communities on a voluntary basis
- (2) Training the trainers courses and the establishment of a register of trainers in the region
- (3) Training and support for assessors in the region
- (4) Mentoring support for community workers including training for mentors

### **The Community partnership skills development programme**

Working together: Learning together is a community participation skills development programme funded by the Scottish Executive. It is designed to encourage a shift in culture in public sector bodies towards working with, listening to and empowering communities. The aim is to support all partners – community representatives, elected members, managers and staff who are involved in community partnerships. People learn together in order to:

- Improve the effectiveness of working in partnership
- Achieve a shared vision of what needs to happen, why it should happen and who should be involved
  
- Build clarity about why things are being done and what they are designed to achieve, so making partnerships more accountable to each other
- Improving communication between communities and agencies

## **Quality assurance**

To be effective community development requires competent organisations where there is an understanding of, and commitment to community development. Reviewing the community development function in organisations should be as important as a financial audit and reviews of other functions.

### **The responsibilities of organisations**

Organisations, whether in the public, private, voluntary or community sectors, which adopt community development as an approach have responsibilities to the public, their staff and other stakeholders. These include the responsibility to:

- Have clear policies in place for community development
- Recognise that community development is a long-term process which requires a long-term commitment
- Provide information to the public and staff about the organisation's commitment to

community development and what this means

- Undertake community development, and allocate resources, in ways that promote equity within and between communities
- Be transparent about the deployment of staff, finance and other resources
- Recruit staff and volunteers fairly and give attention to their training and long-term development
- Be committed to promoting the health and safety of volunteers and employees, giving consideration to the specific risks inherent in community development
- Have in place recording systems, which ensure accountability
- Have clear and well- publicised processes that enable stakeholders to provide feedback. This includes processes to monitor progress and to raise and consider any complaints or concerns of stakeholders
- Dedicate time and resources to evaluation and commit themselves to share experience with others

## Reviews

The community development function in Local Authorities is now subject to review as part of Local Authorities' responsibility to ensure best value. It is good practice to periodically review community development undertaken by organisations in other sectors too. The values of community development mean that it is important that reviews actively involve all stakeholders, tackle inequality and discrimination and are transparent. It is important to share experience of reviews and develop tools for good practice.

### Quality assurance in Brighton and Hove

Local Authorities in Brighton and Hove have supported community development for the past 30 years and for the last 6 years there have been teams of workers. The teams are part of the Social Services Department and work to Local Authority policies on equal opportunities and complaints. Managers have access to Local Authority training in management and supervision skills and information about the work is publicised in the Local Authority newsletter.

Quality work is ensured through regular monthly supervision of staff which is prepared for and recorded. This links with a work programme that has clear targets. There is also a supportive team culture and regular review of progress.

The teams are currently developing service level agreements with local communities, including agreement about how progress is monitored.

## **Social Audit of the Arts Factory**

The Arts Factory, in the Rhondda valley in South Wales started as a work scheme for people with learning disabilities and expanded taking on broader regeneration objectives. It runs arts and pottery businesses which win commissions from across South Wales, as well as a garden centre and other local community businesses, managed work space, and youth facilities.

The Arts Factory embarked on its first Social Audit using the New Economics Foundation workbook as a guide. Against each of the core values of the organisation (e.g. “ground –up action”, “ordinary people”, “positive attitudes”) specific organisational objectives and strategies were defined, and a series of indicators drawn up to assess how well the values were put into practice. The different teams within the Arts Factory came together in workshops to discuss the values and complete a questionnaire based on the indicators. Undertaking this exercise in groups meant that individuals who had difficulties with reading and writing could be paired with members of their team and therefore fully participate.

## **Networking and strategic support**

Effective community development requires opportunities for community activists and volunteers, community workers, and managers to share ideas and experiences and take joint action on issues of common concern. Some of this networking will be face to face and it is important that time and resources are allocated to enable this to happen. Increasingly the internet is used as a tool to enable more frequent contact and networking over longer distances.

### **The importance of networking**

Networking is important because it provides access to information, support, resources and influence. It enables co-operation between practitioners, researchers and policy makers in different sectors through the development of trust and understanding. This co-operation depends on establishing and maintaining both organisational links and personal relationships. Connections which span agency, geography and identity, are especially useful because they bring new perspectives and challenges. These are also the links, which can be most difficult to sustain, and their development may need particular attention accompanied by practical measures to counter prejudices and institutional discrimination.

Networking opportunities are important locally, within regions, countries, and on a UK, European and international basis. Networks related to specialist aspects of community development such as health and the environment are of increasing significance. Networks concerned with urban or rural issues and the perspectives of people experiencing discrimination, for example due to race, gender, disability age or sexuality also have an important role in effective community development.

Networks can draw together a range of voices into a collective whole, thus adding weight to individual perspectives. Clear links with strategic decision-making across sectors are important to achieve maximum influence.

### **Support for networking**

Community workers facilitate networking by putting people in touch with one another, by creating opportunities for people to meet, and by providing safe spaces for interaction and learning. They may assist links between different organisations, or provide support to membership organisations, cross sector partnerships and coalitions.

This aspect of community development needs greater recognition through funding to membership and support agencies, along with careful evaluation of how this supports the development of communities based on social justice and mutual respect.

### **Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations and Ethnic Minority Foundation**

The Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations aims to empower the minority ethnic voluntary sector by providing infrastructure support and developing a professional cadre through its new MBA programme. Each person taking part agrees to transfer his or her knowledge to a further 40 minority ethnic organisations. The project also supports organisations in achieving quality standards.

The Ethnic Minority Foundation aims to generate £100m over a ten year period to support minority ethnic voluntary and community sector organisations. This will be achieved by mobilising a movement of 100,000 minority ethnic professionals who will donate resources of both time and money to strengthen the minority ethnic voluntary and community sector.

### **Wakefield and District Community Network**

The Network started in 1992 when a few Community Workers identified that there was a lack of communication about and support for community development work in Wakefield.

The Network currently has 255 members from various groups and organisations. It offers:

- Quarterly forums which enable members to communicate and share information and knowledge. New members are welcomed and exercises undertaken to consider how to enable communities to attain greater understanding of community development processes and how they work
- A bi-monthly newsletter exchanging information
- A data-base of members, enabling people to find people working in particular geographic areas, on particular forms of community support and with varying skills. Regular mailings also offer other groups the opportunity to advertise events, training and job vacancies

There are two specific support groups for Community Development Workers and Managers. These groups provide peer support and information workshops. They also inform policy makers and funding applicants about the positive outcomes that can be achieved following genuine community consultation and participation.

The Network is supported by statutory training and health funds. It also relies on “in kind” support. There is a Steering Group of members to manage and co-ordinate the network. Most members take part through sharing information and peer support. It is a democratic network with regular reports to

members who identify needs and decide on direction.

## **Conclusion**

This framework is about working with communities and from their experience developing policies, programmes and priorities based on clear values and commitments. This requires a strategic approach which:

- Recognises and analyses the changing context
- Is about working with communities in ways which are empowering, educating and enabling
- Ensures that resources are accessible and allocated fairly within and between communities
- Has clear processes for evaluation and dissemination
- Links community development with strategies for learning
- Ensures that organisations across sectors have policies and practices which support quality community development
- Encourages involvement in existing networks and creation of new networks to support the strategy.

**We look forward to receiving feedback about how this framework has been used and how it could be developed and changed for future use.**

## **Appendix One:**

### **Useful organisations**

ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England) Dean House, Somerford Court, Somerford Road, Cirencester GL7 1TW Tel: 01285 653 477

BASSAC (British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres) 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Winchester House, 11 Cranmer Road, London SW9 6EJ Tel: 0207 7351075

Community Development Cymru, Amman Valley Enterprise, 43 Heol Cae Gurwen, GwaunCae Gurwen Ammanford SA1 1HG Tel 01269 822733

Community Development and Health Network (N. Ireland) , Ballybot House, 22 Cornmarket, Newry, County Down. BT35 8BG Tel: 028302 64606

Community Matters, 8/9 Upper Street London N1 0PQ Tel: 0207 2260189

CDF (Community Development Foundation) 60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AG Tel: 0207 2265375

Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations, Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Sheffield, London E15 1WG Tel:0208 4320308

FCWTG (Federation of Community Work Training Groups) 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Furnival House, 48 Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 4QP Tel 0114 2739391

Forum for Community Work Education (N. Ireland) 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Philip House, 123/137 York Street, Belfast BT15 1AB Tel: 02890 232587

SCDC (Scottish Centre for Community Development) Suite 329 Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ Tel: 0141 248 1924

SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network), 82-84 Windmillhill Street, Motherwell ML1 1TA.

SCCD (Standing Conference for Community Development) 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Furnival House, 48 Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 4QP Tel: 0114 2701718 Email: admin@sccd.solis.co.uk

Ubuntu, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Furnival House, 48 Furnival Gate, Sheffield S1 4QP Tel: 0114 273 9391

WCVA (Wales Council for Voluntary Action) Llys Ifor, Crescent Road, Caerfilli CF8 1XL Tel: 01222 855100

## **Appendix Two:**

## **Useful publications**

Barr A and Hashagan S (2000) ABCD Handbook –A Framework for Evaluating Community Development, Community Development Foundation.

Beazley M and Loftman, P (2001) Race and Regeneration –Black and Minority Ethnic Experience of the Single regeneration Budget, Local Government Information Unit.

Black Training and Enterprise Group (1995) Invisible Partners- the Impact of the SRB on Black Communities

Federation of Community Work Training Groups (2001) Making Changes – A Strategic Framework for Community Development Learning in England.

Francis D, Henderson P with James Derounian (2000) Community Development and Rural Issues

Forrest R and Kearns A (1999) Joined Up Places? Social Cohesion and Neighbourhood Regeneration, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Harris V (ed) (1994) Community Work Skills Manual, The Association of Community Workers.

Henderson P and Summers S (2001) Developing Healthier Communities –A Community Development Approach to Improving Health and Well-being, Health Development Agency.

Hope A and Timmell S (1995) Training for Transformation : A Handbook for Community Workers, Mambo Press.

Jacob S and Popple H (eds) (1994) Community Work in the 1990s, Spokesman.

Popple H (1995) Analysing Community Work:its theory and practice, Open University Press.

Skinner S (1997) Building Community Strengths: A Resource Book for Community Capacity Building, Community Development Foundation.

Smithies J and Webster G (1998) Community Involvement In Health, Ashgate Publishing.

Taylor M (1998) Signposts to Community Development, Community Development Foundation.

Taylor M (1995) Unleashing the Potential: Bringing Residents to the Centre of Regeneration, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Wilson M and Wilde P (1999) Active Partners: Benchmarks for Community Participation in Regeneration, Yorkshire Forward.

# Professional Endorsement of Community Work Education and Training

## Towards an all Ireland Framework Briefing Paper

May 2009

*(Updated from October 2005 'Discussion Paper')*

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*Appendix 1 - Benefits of a Professional Endorsement and Standards Framework*

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## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This short paper is an update of an original discussion paper prepared in late 2005 which informed subsequent all Ireland discussions on professional endorsement of Community Work Education and Training, and the development of associated standards for community work practice. It explicitly placed the two processes in relationship - endorsement could not be possible without a set of standards against which to make judgements. Standards, in practice, are important in their own right however and endorsement processes have to be linked, also, to national educational and qualifications frameworks. Furthermore it situated this work in an Ireland framework that recognized the in an all Ireland framework that recognized and worked with the differing legislative and policy frameworks within common values and principles.

**1.2** This updated paper initially outlines the background to professional endorsement developments and.

## **2. Rationale**

**2.1** Moves towards certification and validation under the auspices of the National Qualifications Framework; the recent establishment of a North South Body for endorsement of Youth Work Education and Training (NSETS); the challenges for Community Work in the ongoing government reviews, developments North & South, and professional concerns regarding tendencies towards dilution of the value base of the discipline and confusion of community based and community work initiatives; give both a timeliness and urgency to discussions on professional endorsement of community work education and formation. Current research on voluntary sector training also underlines the need to clarify differences and possible parallel issues. Developments in community work, education and training throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland further reinforce the case.

**2.2** It is important that the framework for professional endorsement of Community Work Education and Training is in partnership with those individuals and organisation who have through their practice and projects, created a professionally robust and inclusive community work tradition in Ireland focussed directly on collective processes towards a more inclusive, just and equal society. Funders, employers and educators need also to be involved. Access and progression issues are crucial. Community workers are already grappling with these, and increasingly community workers are also concerned with inclusive mechanisms for community work endorsement.

**2.3** These are the thoughts informing this short paper. In it we restate some of the distinguishing features and challenges for community work and community work education and training as essential starting points for any inclusive professional endorsement process; refer briefly to existing education and training programmes and to recent developments in qualifications discussions in Ireland and the UK, outline an understanding of endorsement and some principles which should underpin it in the community work field; and finally make some points for discussion regarding the possible ways forward. It specifically highlights developments to May 2009 to set the scene for the next phase of the all Ireland standards and endorsement project

**2.4** We acknowledge at the outset the challenges to be faced particularly, given the differences in approach between the ESB and NSETS frameworks and the consequent lack of a benchmark for professional community work status.

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### 3. Community work, Education and Training – Characteristics and Challenges

**3.1** Firstly, it continues to be crucial to distinguish between community work and community based activities. By this we mean to distinguish between creating the conditions for community work, for example, through education and personal development initiatives, community work itself and the community services, which may be the outcomes of community work initiatives. Services provided in the community do not automatically have collective outcomes for the whole community – e.g. adult and community based education is usually more likely to benefit individuals, helping individuals make progress in various important ways. Community work, and in focussing on community work, community development activity, organising and community action activities are included – involves analysis and action for change. It seeks to be collective in analysis, action and outcomes and to strive to work through empowering and participative processes.

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Community work is based on a series of principles which seek to go beyond consultation to participation and beyond capacity building (which is an essential building block but can be reduced to enhanced performance and learning to 'get it right') to consciousness raising and empowerment. It recognises the changing and often hidden nature of the structural inequalities based on 'race', class, gender, disability to name but a few and seeks to be transformative rather than conforming. These features which distinguish community work from other forms of intervention in the community may require the ability to go beyond what is termed the acceptable level of dissent yet managing to communicate and work with and for a variety of sectors.

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**3.2** Secondly, underpinning principles of participation and empowerment are ideas about moving from one role to another – e.g. from activist to paid worker – which challenge traditional notions of the professional and who can be a community worker. This does not mean that anyone can be a community worker, and that no education or formation process is required. On the contrary, people undertaking community work need to be at least as capable as students successfully completing the community work courses, such as those we run at NUIM, but there should be a variety of ways to reach this position, including validated experience. All such processes need to acknowledge the levels of conceptualisation and written expression increasingly required by those employing and funding today's community workers.

**3.3** Thirdly, in looking at training and education it is considered essential to distinguish between:

- Consciousness building for participation as unpaid activists. The term consciousness building is used to infer a journey inclusive of but beyond capacity building with tools for analysis and understanding built in.
- Education and training for a variety of professionals in the use of a community work approach.
- Education and training for the professional community worker.

All have different roles, tasks and responsibilities. A key challenge is to build appropriate links between the three arenas without pretending that they are all the same. There are particular tensions between technical training for the technical job of capacity building and education for a practice of consciousness raising and challenge. These are somewhat analogous with creating a peg to fit the hole, or asking why the hole is there in the first place. Education in using a community work approach or method should not replace core education and training in community work. There is a difference between a community work approach to health issues, which can help to develop a more responsive health service, identifying and working on health as a community work issue seeking transformed service, with active participation in decision making by all sectors.

Care must be taken also to examine the increasingly market driven nature of training and education and the knowledge, values, skills base, as well as personal experience of community work of those providing it. Falling birth rates mean fewer students for all sorts of third level colleges and numbers of training and development consultancies have grown hugely. The push towards accreditation, endorsement and awards and progression routes which is now a feature of all education processes cannot be at the expense of the core (and challenging) principles which inform the discipline. Standards in the terms already outlined are far more important than standardisation.

**3.4** Fourthly, paid or unpaid participation in community work needs to be grounded in the reality of the marginalised. In an increasingly diverse Ireland, North and South, this means addressing racism, promoting interculturalism, responding to ongoing gender inequalities and discrimination against disabled people and other groups, taking on board the outcomes of poverty and social exclusion, and walking on the tight rope where they all intersect. Old structural inequalities, sectarian and class divisions, cannot be ignored as new needs emerge but hierarchies of oppression need to be avoided. Rural disadvantage will be addressed through focussing not only on the disadvantages of rural communities but also on the inequalities within and between them.

**3.5** Fifthly, in Ireland the experiences of marginalised peoples and even defining those who constitute the marginalised have to be contextualised in an increasingly globalised economy. We need also to be mindful of the European project towards harmonisation of education and training processes and to see Europe as an important consideration at this shaping juncture for community work education. An insular approach will not serve future generations of increasingly mobile community workers well.

**3.6** Lastly regarding access, our work at the NUIM on access for activists to professional education for community workers which began with the commencement of a full time non-graduate programme with open access for mature students (23+) in 1985, and through which a wide range of activists, mostly from marginalised communities have become successful full-time community workers including sixteen Travellers (the largest known number of Travellers to complete education at any Irish third level institution) has led us to some conclusions. Of central importance is our direct and ongoing involvement in community work programmes and initiatives outside the university context.

**3.7** In third level institutions equality of access, treatment and outcome have to become an integral part of what education policy requires of them, North and South. Crucial also for access and for programme development overall is our partnership with practitioners, past and present, student placement supervisors and employers without whom the courses could not run. We believe such a partnership, inclusive of, but not dominated by employers, is crucial for the full development of community work education into the future. Community work in this way can be promoted beyond a way of working in other disciplines, and beyond the methods that fit time limited policies of a particular era, towards community work, and community workers engaged at all levels, both on the ground, managing the agency, rather than explaining to others how to manage them, and contributing to policy and practice in a variety of arenas.

#### **4. Professional Education and Training for Community Work in Ireland**

Appropriate education and training is recognised to be of fundamental importance in the development of professional practice. Concern to support activists and local people taking up full time community work jobs have sometimes led to confused responses in this area but the need for pre-service, in-service and ongoing education, in other words a variety of forms of education, to meet different needs, is now acknowledged as key to the future.

#### **4.1 Professional and pre-professional Programmes**

Until NUIM Department of Social Studies established the post-graduate Higher Diploma in Community Work in 1981 no specific recognised community work education programmes existed in the Republic. This was followed by a full time two year professional Diploma in Community & Youth Work (DYCW) in 1985 and a three year professional in-service course. A post-qualifying one year, BA Applied Social Studies, was introduced in 1998 and an MA in Applied Social Studies in 2001. NUI Cork offer professional education programmes at Bachelors level and professional education programmes in Youth and Community Work have been offered by the University of Ulster since the 1970's. With a somewhat different approach, NUI Galway offers an MA in Community Development inclusive of research, and practical assignments and a number of Institutes of Technology, in particular Dundalk are engaged in the field as is the Tipperary Institute. In recent years, the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) and now the Further Education Training and Accreditation Council (FETAC) have become increasingly involved with community based providers in providing certification for youth and community work modules at pre-professional level. In Northern Ireland, the Community Work Education and Training Network has in the past offered supported accessible programmes linked to UK standards and framework, while Belfast Metropolitan College is in partnership with UU offering the first year of UU's B.Sc. in Community Development linked to the UK National Occupational Standards (NOS).

It should be noted that while all the national Qualifications Frameworks use the term levels, the nomenclature does not automatically pertain to the same standards. A document comparing levels across boundaries can be found at [www.qualifications-across-boundaries.org/compare/uk\\_ireland](http://www.qualifications-across-boundaries.org/compare/uk_ireland)

While all make all providers make their unique contributions, the absence of agreed occupational standards and programme endorsement processes, particularly in the Republic, has contributed to confusion in relation to progression routes, standards, the content of community work education and appropriateness of educators and trainers.

### **5. Professional Endorsement**

Endorsement may be described as a system for recognising programmes that lead to professional qualification awards. The endorsement process sets and assesses professional standards in relation to the content and quality of a community work programme in preparing students to work effectively as professional community workers in a range of contexts. For example, programmes should relate to EU directives and directions regarding recognition of degrees and diplomas. Also in order for endorsement processes to operate effectively and credibly for professional education, the standards must be closely related to agreed occupational standards of professional practice. Endorsement is concerned with setting and monitoring criteria in relation to the following among others:

1. Content of education and training
2. Process of education and training
3. Achievement of professional standards of practice

At the time of the original discussion paper in 2005, occupational standards for community work were of a generic and informal nature and there was no Irish endorsement processes in place in for professional level community work or community development. Of the social professions, only social work had a National Qualifications Board made up of employers, providers, practitioners, client groupings etc. Appendix 1 outlines some of the potential benefits of professional endorsement to a

variety of stakeholders. The next section outlines the developments that have contributed to current thinking about standards and endorsement beginning with the related discipline of youth work

## **6. Recent Developments in Community Work Northern Ireland and the UK**

Following developments in the UK, the Youth Council of Northern Ireland began to act under licence as the endorsement body for youth work training in partnership with NYWAC (National Youth Work Advisory Committee, established under the Youth Work Act 1997) in the Republic to act on all Ireland basis for youth work only. The North/South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) was formally launched in January 2006 and published its 'Criteria and Procedures for the Professional Endorsement of Youth Work Education and Training' published in April 2006. To date, it has focused on the endorsement of all professional third level programmes of education and training for youth work both in the Republic and Northern Ireland. It is currently exploring options to endorse pre-professional programmes in further education. The NSETS criteria for endorsement are due to be revised in 2009-10.

**6.1** On foot of the 1999 Qualifications Act (Education and Training), the National Qualifications Authority has developed a National Qualifications Framework, within which all learning programmes from junior cert to PhD will eventually be located. This is a levels framework, so it is important to ensure that the professional education programmes are at the highest appropriate level. FETAC has set standards for major awards in community work, community work and associated areas at Levels 5 and 6.

**6.2** Taken together, these developments have contributed to an increased awareness of the need to agree professional standards in practice and education, develop quality standards for education provision, and establish endorsement processes. Also, there is clearly a need to be proactive about making strategic links with the NQAI, the community sector generally and specifically allied social professions e.g. childcare, social work.

**6.3** The situations in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England are diverse and reflect varying stages of development in the establishment of structures responsible for endorsement of community development education and training<sup>1</sup>.

The question of endorsement of professional training in the UK has been around since the Albemarle Committee, which reviewed the youth service in 1960. It recommended the establishment of a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth Leaders. In 1965 the JNC changed its title and scope to become the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens. Following a major review of the JNC Grading Matrix, the report was renamed the JNC for Youth and Community Workers in 1987.

Up to 2000 the main qualifications available were HE Diploma courses for youth and community work. These were recognised by the National Youth Agency (not Scotland), ([www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)) who inspected programmes using detailed criteria to assess standards and then endorsed those programmes that met this standard and professionally validated the qualification gained by individuals, which allowed them to be employed under JNC terms and conditions by Local Authorities. More recently other external changes have led

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<sup>1</sup> Information for the UK + NI section was extracted from *Federation of Community Development Learning (FCDL) briefing notes, 2004* and has been updated by Val Harris in Feb 2009

to the NYA having to decide between being an awarding and an endorsing body, and it has kept the endorsement role.

In the mid 1990's community development created its own national occupational standards, followed later by separate youth work standards. As youth work and community development started to separate so community development lost its representation on the JNC panel and was replaced by the voluntary youth work sector. The NYA retains the responsibility for the professional endorsement of qualifications for recognition by the JNC panel for youth and community work – the panel no longer accepts responsibility for community work. There have been ongoing efforts by the ESB and FCDL to engage with the JNC in relation to this issue.

In the mid 1990's a series of conferences entitled 'Towards 2001' were held which led in 1997 to the establishment of the Council for Standards in Community Work Training and Qualifications in England - known as ESB, ( the England Standards Board - [www.englandstandardsboard.co.uk](http://www.englandstandardsboard.co.uk)) which had a remit of improving quality in community work learning and qualifications programmes, through a field led endorsement process. Endorsement by the ESB is thus a professional endorsement by the community work field of the quality of a community development (CD) learning programme against criteria developed from the CD NOS. Endorsement by the ESB does not provide any individual professional validation or accreditation; endorsement can be on non-accredited and programmes accredited by other awarding bodies.

The community development NOS were first revised in 2002 and again in 2009 (see 6.5 below). The standards are currently held by the relevant sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK, who took over the responsibility from the previous NTO known as Paulo. All of the occupations within Paulo moved into the community learning and development constituency within LLUK ([www.lluk.org](http://www.lluk.org)), along side Further Education and Higher Education.

**6.4 A couple of years after the England Standards Board (ESB) was established, a government funded project supported explorations across Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales throughout 2000/2001 to test how the occupational area of community work could develop a structure to provide mechanisms for endorsement. This involved numerous discussions, debates and actions, between and within the community work field in England, NI, Wales and Scotland, and many of these debates have continued, particularly with Wales and Northern Ireland over the past few years. The endorsement process has been designed and refined by the field over a number of years to be a rigorous process that is based on the community development national occupational standards. It is useful to note that endorsement by the ESB is a professional endorsement by the community work field of the quality of a community development (CD) learning programme against criteria developed from the CD NOS. Endorsement by the ESB does not provide any individual professional validation or accreditation; endorsement can be on non-accredited and programmes accredited by other awarding bodies, in other words endorsement does not set a benchmark for the level of professional qualification. In addition, it should be noted that ESB endorsement does not set down minimum criteria for the nature and duration of fieldwork placement vis a vis a set amount of time. Both of these latter points are subject to ongoing discussion in 2009.**

**It should be noted that the Community Work Education and Training Network (CWETN) had been particularly active in taking a lead in this work in Northern Ireland, though it became clear after the pilot endorsement project in 2001 that CWETN did not have the resources to 'roll out' the endorsement as was needed in NI on its own. CWETN's efforts in recent years have been hampered by lack of funding and core staff. The work formally undertaken by CWETN has been continued by voluntary commitment.**

6.5 Note on Revised National Occupational Standards (LLUK)

Following a comprehensive consultation process the LLUK ([www.lluk.org](http://www.lluk.org)) has recently agreed a revised set of standards for Community Development. The final meeting of the Project Steering Group, took place in London in April 2009. The Steering group was made up of representatives from across the broad community development sector in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The meeting considered the draft of the revised National Occupational Standards for Community Development. The draft standards were prepared following a wide ranging consultation process by the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL - [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)) who were commissioned to undertake this work in 2008. This process identified six key standards as indicated below:

- Standard 1 - Understanding Community development and its application to practice
- Standard 2 - Understanding communities and their needs OR Undertaking community based research
- Standard 3 - Support effective group / collective work
- Standard 4 - Develop and support effective working relationships
- Standard 5 - Supporting learning from shared experiences
- Standard 6 - Develop, maintain and sustain organisations

Each standard in turn is sub-divided into a number of units which give more detail. There has been a general welcome for the Standards which are clearer than past versions and also embed the work in a set of values. It is anticipated that these standards will be formally released by the end of 2009 for public use. Technically, while in the UK system standards are level free there is an acknowledgment that the new standards will need to link to levels of qualification in practice and that the issue of endorsement and bench-making of professional practice needs to be addressed in the short-term.

## 6.6 All Ireland ad hoc group and 'Towards Standards'

Following research funded by CPA and CWETN in 2004, an initial seminar to explore the potential to develop all island standards for quality community work was held in Maynooth in October 2005. It led to the establishment of an ad hoc group of practitioners, educators and funders from a variety of organisations and institutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It was set up to be relevant in both jurisdictions and to reflect the distinct ethos of Irish community work while acknowledging the differences associated with different sets of legislation and policies, but recognising the key similarities in values and principles, as well as the continued importance of cross-border initiatives and worker mobility. This work was funded by the Combat Poverty Agency ([www.cpa.ie](http://www.cpa.ie)) and managed by the Community Workers Co-operative ([www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie))

The work of the ad hoc group included a series of consultation events and all Ireland meetings over the course of eighteen months. This process resulted in the production of '*Towards Standards for Quality Community Work*' a statement and exposition of the values and principles that underpin community work. The aim is to provide a reference framework for all community work stakeholders – communities, employers, funders, and education and training providers, as well as paid and unpaid practitioners. *Towards Standards* is concerned with setting out the key principles, expectations and ethical boundaries relating to practice as well identifying the areas of knowledge, skills, qualities, values and practice principles that combine to form standards relating to community work practice, and to education and training for that practice. It is worth noting that it informed the development of the LLUK NOS for Community Development.

The '*Towards Standards*' publications were launched in Dublin in late 2008 by John Curran, TD, Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht. Following the success of that event, the Combat Poverty Agency provided funding to support the promotion of '*Towards Standards*'.

As this paper is being drafted a series of regional and national events are being undertaken by CWC to promote 'Towards Standards'. The documents are available in pdf format at [www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie).

## 7. Towards an all Ireland Framework for Endorsement

The *ad hoc* group has an opportunity following the successful launch of 'Towards Standards' and the imminent adoption of revised NOS for Community Development. We suggest the following seven steps provide a potential way forward.

### 7.1 Firstly, construct an ideal North/South Framework for endorsement

- a) With due reference to National Qualifications Frameworks and EU considerations including the Bologna process and its implications
- b) Inserting full professional endorsement of community work education and training in (at least) the same position as youth work and social work professional education and training.
- c) Developing as part of the Framework an access ladder at various levels of certification North and South to encompass the needs of activists, people on state schemes and training programmes, voluntary participants in community work groups etc.
- d) Positioning the training and education given to people using a community work approach at various levels within the Framework, depending on the community work content of the training and education but not with the same status as professional community work education and training
- e) Developing as part of the Framework a continuation ladder of post professional certification on both a thematic (e.g. .management) and generic basis up to and including doctorate levels.
- f) Developing as a possible part of the Framework a method for involving in it at different levels, thematic education and training programmes on components of community work e.g. campaigning, social analysis
- g) Developing as a possible part of the Framework a method for including at appropriate levels endorsement of validated experience and/or particular routes to professional endorsement for practitioners with proper track records but without formal qualifications

Base the Framework overall on the understanding of community work articulated in the NOS and 'Towards Standards' ensuring that the Framework is fully reflective of the standards, that they benchmark the full professional endorsement at honours degree as it evident on both social work and youth work and increasingly in social care. See Appendix 2 for a list of principles that might usefully underpin and endorsement process.

### 7.2 Develop at the same time an outline Framework of essential and desirable criteria in terms of

- Content overall
- Process
- Principles underpinning
- Participant selection, support and endorsement
- Fieldwork Practice requirement
- Staffing arrangement

For programmes which might be seeking endorsement at any given level on the Framework. See Appendix 3 for NSETS criteria for youth work professional endorsement.

### 7.3 In order to support and give reality to the work in 7.1 and 7.2 above develop a short list of programmes North and South who have expressed interest in might want to relate to the Framework

7.4 Outline a possible North-South Endorsement Body Structure inclusive of all the stakeholders and the roles it might play, including various financial implications and possible sources of funding with due reference to the new North-South Youth Work Endorsement Body and the Social Work Qualification Boards etc.

7.5 Further Develop the case for a North-South Framework for Endorsement of Community Work Education and Training through analysis of the

- North-South practice contexts
- North-South policy and programme proposal and funding arrangements
- The quality assurance implications of classification and coherence.

7.6 Identify and engage directly with key stakeholders to take on board their views and get their support. These include relevant government department, institutional and community based educational providers, key agencies and practitioners North and South.

The main work on points 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 above requires input which cannot be done on a voluntary basis. North-South applications for funding which also necessitate some of the work suggested in 7.5 and 7.6 are involved. The departments which attended the 2005 Seminar have indicated a willingness to consider such requests. In addition LLUK Northern Ireland has recently secured funding for an Ireland Community Development Standards Project which may provide a vehicle for these developments.

## **8. Conclusion**

In 2005, the members of the *ad hoc* group made a choice to contribute to shaping the future of community work education and training and by implication the future nature of community work instead of allowing these decisions made elsewhere, or reached by default in the interests of private consultancies, education institutions chasing ever more elusive students and funders and policy makers in search of quick solutions to old and new challenges.

We know that as ever time is not on our side, but collectively we have made useful and real progress in the last few years. Our hope is that this paper provides the basis to continue that collective action towards securing community work interventions into the future, despite the straitened times.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Benefits of a Professional Endorsement and Standards Framework**

#### ***Community Work Practice***

- ⇒ benchmarks community development as a profession in its own right requiring specific skills.
- ⇒ informs what is required to implement community development policy into practice
- ⇒ **validates community development as an approach in its own right and places a value on community work as an occupation in its own right with community work as a process at its core.**
- ⇒ establishes a process which is informed by community work principles

#### ***Community Workers***

- ⇒ provides clear direction and guidance on standards of professional practice
- ⇒ informs community workers about courses that are validated
- ⇒ enables workers to make informed decisions on accessing courses.

#### ***Employers of community workers***

- ⇒ provides clear direction and guidance on standards of professional practice and courses that meet those standards
- ⇒ information is available on professional community work courses in order to help with recruitment and selection procedures

#### ***Awarding Bodies***

- ⇒ provides guidance in their awarding systems in relation specifically to community work education and training.
- ⇒ ensures that community work courses, process and content is informed by people involved in the area of community work
- ⇒ a endorsement forum could work in partnership with awarding bodies.

## Appendix 2

### Principles to underpin professional endorsement

This is a non exhaustive list which covers issues and areas always tabled when community work education and training is discussed. Each requires further analysis as well as grounding in the matters discussed in the first part of this paper. They are presented here as a starting point for discussion, development, modification and addition.

It is important that any endorsement process is underpinned by principles that suit the needs of community work as a professional practice committed to social change. There is a need to be clear about how principles relate to one another. Fundamentally endorsement should be underpinned by a core framework incorporating:

1. independence...not controlled by a single entity
2. coherent links with and responsive to the field and stakeholders
3. commitment to highest possible standards of excellence in professional practice, analysis etc.

Principles underpinning professional endorsement for community work would need among other things to focus on:

#### **Ethos**

The process and methodology of education and training and their assessment should

- **reflect the principles, practice and ethos of professional community work practice**

#### **Process**

The process should

- emphasise challenging and reflective space to analyse issues and practice both individually and collectively;
- involve stakeholders' participation in group processes for core aspects of the programme

#### **Content**

Providers should ensure that learning **programme content** is consistent both with defined learning outcomes and the qualification level. Content should be reflective of current practice and sectoral issues, contain appropriate modules from associated areas and reflect a transformational model that emphasises a cycle of practice, reflection and analysis.

Professionally supervised placement should cover a minimum period of 24 weeks (in line with other social professions) and be an assessed mandatory requirement for award of any professional diploma.

#### **'Participant-centred'**

Education should to the optimum degree, be **'participant-centred'**, in that it should reflect the participant's needs; recognise and build on the participant's existing strengths and experience; and involve the participant actively in building and sustaining a positive learning environment.

#### **Programme Staff**

In addition to the relevant theoretical or academic expertise, **staff** responsible for direct community work education or leading such programmes should have **demonstrable professional experience** and **professional qualifications** as well as ongoing connection with the community work field (again in line with the recognised requirements of other professional areas).

### **Assessment**

Assessment processes should be reflective of practice i.e. practice, theory, knowledge and analysis and should ensure their capacity to practice is guaranteed.

### **Resources**

Providers should ensure that they have access to adequate **resources** and capacities to successfully deliver, assess and administer a programme of professional education and training

### **Equitable Partnership**

Provision should from the outset be built on an **equitable partnership** between the relevant parties or 'stakeholders', including (as appropriate): centres/institutions, trainers/providers, participants, workers, employers, trade unions and community work associations.

### **Transparency**

Providers should ensure **transparency** in relation to **selection criteria, fair and equitable access** for participants, **process and content of the training programme, intended outcomes for individuals, assessment of all aspects of coursework** and the **nature and status of qualification**

### **Flexibility**

Subject to reasonable pedagogical and institutional considerations, centres and providers should aim for optimum **flexibility** for the learner regarding weight of workload and pace of learning, accumulation of credits and/or certification, and progression through stages of learning/certification.

### **Equality**

Providers should ensure that there is an explicit commitment **to equality**. Unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is eliminated both in access to learning programmes, assessment and during the process of assessment for any qualification. Equal opportunities should also consider

- proactive targeting of excluded groups;
- identify progression routes into courses for those group;
- resource participation of underrepresented groups.

## ***Appendix 3***

### **The Professional Endorsement and Monitoring Process**

The following are based on the 'Criteria and Procedures for the Professional Endorsement of Youth Work Education and Training' published in April 2006 by the North/South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS).

### **Stages in the process of Endorsement**

There are six key stages in the professional endorsement process. These are:

1. preliminary enquiries to the endorsement bodies, initial consultation and advice from staff, decision by sponsor to proceed (or not) to formal registration and the entering into a formal contract with the endorsement body.
2. planning and preparing a proposal, designing a draft submission;
3. consideration of a draft submission by a sub group of the endorsement body and feedback to the institution;
4. revision of the submission (if required) by the institution;
5. consideration of this revised submission by a working group of the endorsement body (this consideration may entail a visit to the institution and always will in the case of new submissions); and
6. recommendation of sub group, response to conditions (if any), successful completion of process, formal agreement by the endorsement body

### **Criteria for Endorsement and Requirements for the Content of Submissions**

Each of the following seventeen headings for the content of submissions has both criteria and indicative content e.g. No. 10 Fieldwork practice has a minimum requirement of 18 weeks over an undergraduate programme whose minimum length is two years full time and 12 weeks on a postgraduate programme.

1. Organisational Arrangements
2. Nature of the Award
3. Market Analysis and Institutional Commitment
4. Confirmation of Professional Recognition
5. Length of Programme
6. Accrediting Prior Learning
7. Professional Focus, Coherence and Structure
8. Application of Equal Opportunities Principles
9. Programme Delivery: Teaching and Learning Methods
10. Fieldwork Arrangements
11. Assessment of the Whole Programme
12. Management and Development of the Programme
13. Quality Assurance Systems
14. Admissions
15. Staffing and Resourcing
16. Other Resources
17. Student Handbook