

The Advocacy Initiative

Breaking Through:

The Future of Social Justice Advocacy

The Royal Dublin Society, Anglesea Road,
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

July 8th, 2014

FINAL CONFERENCE AND LEGACY

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FOREWORD Kieran Murphy, Chairperson, The Advocacy Initiative

Thinking back to the emergence of The Advocacy Initiative in 2008, I am struck by the nature of the journey we have shared together. Today's conference represents the culmination of this work, but more than that it is an expression of the potential of our collective energy. Rather than the end of The Advocacy Initiative, I see today as also the beginning of the future. Over the coming years the value of The Advocacy Initiative will be realised in the work of social justice advocates.

Through the project we have learned many things about the nature of advocacy, how it is perceived, how we work together as a sector and the challenges we face. The Initiative has created a space in which we have built enough trust to work through some very challenging issues. That energy will not go away, but will be a valuable resource as social justice advocates carve out their future and the future of our shared society.

For me when you strip it all away social justice advocacy is about the world that I want to live in, the world I want to share with others. Working with people who have a similar vision, no matter what sector they come from or what issue they are concerned about, has been an inspiring experience.

Today is the end of our three-year work programme, but not the end of our collective journey. We have done what we set out to do. We have generated new knowledge, we have created opportunities for reflection and debate, and we have strengthened capacity. But more importantly we have seeded this work for the years to come. I hope that we have started a conversation that will continue in a myriad of ways.

One way in which this legacy will be built, is by the seven organisations who have taken on legacy projects. Over the next three years they will broaden engagement with the tools and outputs of the Initiative, and continue the conversations that have been started. But the legacy of The Advocacy Initiative is much more than that. Like a dandelion that has seeded and blown away in the wind, I am not quite sure where the seeds will land, but they will land.

Thinking back to the first few years of The Advocacy Initiative, in some ways we started from a place of distrust. Certainly there was a real sense that advocacy was under threat from the state. But there were no or few spaces where there could be a reflection and dialogue about social justice advocacy: its purpose, methodologies, effectiveness, assumptions, and legitimacy. Where spaces existed or we

created them there were low levels of trust, we did not share perspectives and there was not always room for dissent from dominant narratives. Indeed in the beginning, the legitimacy of The Advocacy Initiative itself was challenged.

I am not suggesting we have overcome all of these challenges, but the last few years has seen the emergence of new capacities for dialogue. What we have achieved is the creation of safe(ish) spaces for different perspectives to be shared and explored. We have opened a box, which I don't think will be shut easily, and advocacy and the communities we work for and with will be the better for it.

Thank you to everyone who engaged in The Advocacy Initiative and made it the success that it is. I would like to extend a special thanks to all the members of the Steering Committee, as well as my colleagues on the Project Management Group, who took that leap of faith openly, with energy and honesty. Many individuals from across a wide variety of sectors – civil servants, politicians, media, trade unions – engaged frankly and wholeheartedly. It was not always easy to hear what they had to say but it was always important.

I would also like to thank Anna Visser and Clodagh O'Brien, our staff, for their commitment and hard work over the last three years. We sought to explore new ways of working and they certainly rose to the challenge.

I hope today is about blowing those dandelions seeds far and wide and that you come across something that will inspire you, a seed that will bloom and flower for many years to come.

“For me when you strip it all away social justice advocacy is about the world that I want to live in, the world I want to share with others. Working with people who have a similar vision, no matter what sector they come from or what issue they are concerned about, has been an inspiring experience.”

OVERVIEW OF THE ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

In 2008, following a discussion at a summer school in Trinity College, a loose group of individuals from a broad range of organisations responded to a growing sense that something had to change. Often heard was the refrain that the community and voluntary sector would be 'unrecognisable' in five years. What was going to happen to advocacy? With the shifting economic, political, social and institutional realities, deep questions began to be asked about the impact of advocacy, the effectiveness of our strategies, and the sense of an increasingly hostile and defensive relationship with policy-makers. Advocacy was changing, organisations were changing, tried and tested methods were changing, and social realities were changing.

The emerging Steering Committee of The Advocacy Initiative started to address these questions; they organised workshops and commissioned research. From there they developed a three year work programme to get underneath the many understandings and assumptions about advocacy in order to re-energise it and reframe the relationship between advocacy and democracy. The plan had three main tools for doing this: generating research, simulating debate and reflection, and strengthening advocacy capacity. These objectives have played out across a wide range of activities over the past three years.

Since 2011 the Initiative has organised 15 national events and supported 11 local events (1,500 people attended); published 11 tools, resources and research reports; 10,000 people visited our website, half of them came back regularly; 1,200 received our newsletter; we engaged with politicians, civil servants, the media, and trade unions; we sought the views of the general public; and we spoke at over 20 external events and conferences. We were often surprised by what we found out. Our legacy website draws on a synthesis of all of this work and presents the story and learning of The Advocacy Initiative. The website along with our seven legacy partners will keep that story alive for another three years, and hopefully beyond that.

As our final evaluation concludes there was also something unique in how the Initiative did its work. The project is an example a new and reimagined way of working together. It was a deep collaboration between organisations and individuals that do not naturally orbit the same values or frameworks. We invested in projects, space and opportunities, avoided setting up an institutional structure and aimed to generate approaches that energised participants

and asked them to think differently. Not everything we tried worked, but we did have the opportunity to explore new approaches. We experienced very broad good will from a range of stakeholders; nearly everyone agreed to join us on part of the journey when asked. There were different expectations and objectives, but a shared sense that despite the challenges social justice advocates remain seriously ambitious for their work.

Advocacy has changed in the last five years, it has evolved but it is recognisable. Advocates have had to adapt and hopefully the The Advocacy Initiative has and will continue to support that progression into the future.

“The Advocacy Initiative has created a generosity of spirit, an open environment for sharing and learning from each other... that is not going to go away”

6th Knowledge Exchange Forum participant

Breaking Through:

AGENDA

9:30 Registration

10.00 Pulling together - A synthesis of the work of The Advocacy Initiative 2010-2014
Kieran Murphy, Chairperson, The Advocacy Initiative

10.30 What now? Introducing our legacy strategy *Legacy partners*

11:00 Coffee Break

11.30 **Challenging Perspectives: A series of talks on the implications of the learnings of The Advocacy Initiative**
Moderated by Aine Lawlor, RTÉ

- **Awareness and understanding (PR/Media):** Edel Hackett, PR Consultant & Activist
- **Credibility and legitimacy (Politician):** Senator Ivana Bacik
- **Capacity (Activist with experience of poverty & exclusion):** Hazel Larkin
- **Relationship building and trust (Civil servant):** Jim Walsh, Department of Social Protection
- **Effective strategies (Social Justice Advocate):** Kathleen O'Meara, Irish Cancer Society
- **Independence (Trade Union):** John Douglas, Mandate

13.15 Lunch

14.30 **Future shock: How will our advocacy be different?**
Planning session for different possible futures
Facilitated by Chris Chapman, Art of Navigation

16.30 **Close & Celebration**
Why do we do what we do and how will it be different?

FUTURE SHOCK: HOW WILL OUR ADVOCACY NEED TO BE DIFFERENT?

Conference planning session for different possible futures

When we think about the future of civil society organisations in Ireland and of social justice advocacy in particular, then the environment/context that we work within is not a predictable constant.

Let's think ahead a couple of general elections, possibly as far as 2021 and beyond. What would we need to be thinking/planning if...

A The established political parties have all declined, Europe has fragmented, the global economy has been chronically unstable, public sector expenditure has continued to decline and there is an overwhelming sense of chaos, uncertainty and foreboding... OR

B Established political parties have all declined, but there are lots of interesting, emerging, 'bottom-up' social and economic experiments all across Europe with rapid learning and cross-fertilisation, aided by smart use of technologies and the role of European and National institutions evolving very much in the direction of 'enablers'... OR

C The state at various levels (local, national and European) has reacted to continuing difficulties by retrenching and becoming more and more authoritarian and less and less listening. Generally the broad population accepts this as necessary... OR

D There has been a growing movement towards deepening democracy; the state in partnership with civil society has led attempts to foster broader and deeper democratic participation. New measures such as citizen assemblies, citizen petitions, participatory budgeting, support for civil society engagement, etc. have been experimented with at local and national level with growing success... OR

E Life has been boring – we have lived through austerity and 'bumping along the bottom', the economy has grown slowly and unemployment has been declining. Most people think things are pretty much going okay and didn't want to be reminded of those who were still at the margins or that there might still be bigger problems looming ...OR

F There has been a growing global movement against income inequality globally, slowly and incrementally political actors and civil society have developed a shared agenda to tackle extreme inequality which has resulted in measures such as a financial transaction tax, wealth tax, progressive income tax etc. resulting in increasing capacity to spend on environmental and social sustainability domestically and internationally.

As an exercise, let's divide into groups to (1) flesh out each scenario somewhat and (2) to agree a NAME for each scenario, before we consider the following questions:

- What would it be like for me as a social justice advocate, trying to do what I do, in this scenario? What would matter to me most? What would I need to pay particular attention to?
- What would be going on in our coalitions, collaborations and as a sector as a whole? What would we need to pay particular attention to in terms of how we work together?
- What specific goals would we need to prioritise in such a scenario?

Whilst each individual will only get to work in depth with one scenario, at the end of the experience people will come together from different scenarios to draw out the learning which is relevant across all of them. The objective is to take away relevant learning, no matter what the future holds.

EXTRACTS FROM PULLING TOGETHER: A SYNTHESIS OF THE ADVOCACY INITIATIVE 2010-2014

One of the challenges facing The Advocacy Initiative as it entered its final stages was how to bring together the learning and draw overall conclusions from the broad range of activities undertaken. The Steering Committee decided to produce a 'synthesis' – our attempt to digest everything that had happened. We are grateful to Dr. Kathy Walsh for her guidance and energy in working on this.

The six key sections of this synthesis form the structure of our legacy website which addresses:

- What is social justice advocacy?
- What we did – the story of The Advocacy Initiative
- Who does social justice advocacy and what was going on from 2010-2014?
- What was the learning?
- What next?
- Resources

The full report is also available as a PDF on the website.

The following sections are extracts from the overall synthesis.

What is social justice advocacy?

At the start of the project a working statement on social justice advocacy was developed which coined it as planned, organised and sustained actions with the purpose of influencing public policy outcomes with/and on behalf of a vulnerable group, community or the wider public good. Once we had established what advocacy was the next stage was to investigate who was doing it. Following consultation we decided to focus on two parties involved in social justice advocacy; civil society and the community and voluntary sector.

Civil society is the space between the household and state and can include non-governmental and non-profit organisations, trade unions, the media and academia amongst others. The community and voluntary sector, while not having a monopoly on social justice advocacy does have a critical role in addressing social exclusion and ensuring marginalised voices are heard.

Who does social justice advocacy and what was going on from 2010-2014?

The lack of a common definition of what constitutes advocacy made it difficult to quantify the number of community and

voluntary organisations involved in social justice advocacy work. What we did find was that 39% of the community and voluntary organisations surveyed as part of the 2012 Mapping Study are engaged in social justice advocacy work, mostly at a local level and to a lesser extent at a national level. These organisations employed a wide range of advocacy strategies and techniques, split evenly between activities that engage with the decision making system 'insider' and those that sought to influence the decision making system from outside 'outsider'.

Community and voluntary organisations generally reported doing more social justice advocacy work generally and specifically more 'insider' focused activities than they had been in the past. In addition an increasing number of community and voluntary sector organisations had become involved in alliances and/or networks in order to progress their advocacy work. Interestingly it was found that organisations who undertook both advocacy and service provision work were generally better regarded by the state than organisations that did only did advocacy work.

What emerged was a complex and at times uneasy relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the state, linked both to historical events as well as to the diverse and disparate nature of the sector. The existence of a variety of different expectations, understandings and perceptions of the role of the sector was also found to contribute to the complexity and challenging nature of the relationships. On a more positive note policy-makers and influencers generally understood the potential role of advocacy by the sector in a democracy, with varying degrees of positivity about the actual role and less positive feedback about the role in practice. Relationships between the community and voluntary sector and other sectors (including the media, trade unions and general public) would probably best be summarised as 'underdeveloped'.

“I think there’s a lot of energy around change at the moment and people are committed to making a difference particularly in spaces like The Advocacy Initiative...”

Participant at the 6th Knowledge Exchange Forum

What was the learning of The Advocacy Initiative?

This section draws on the key findings emerging from the various studies we commissioned and activities undertaken to answer a number of questions.

Value placed on social justice advocacy work

We found that the majority of groups (including civil servants, politicians, general public, trade unions and the media) recognised that community and voluntary sector advocacy work has a role to play in democratic society. While some believed the role was specific to service provision, others believed that advocacy work had a distinct role to play in policy development. Some objectives were well understood, others less so and some simply did not arise in conversations:

- The role of community and voluntary social justice advocacy in enabling minority views to be heard and in providing 'ground truth' to government are clearly and widely valued.
- The role of the sector in mobilising citizens, improving policies and providing expertise in contrast were valued by some policy-makers,

trade unions, the sector and those experiencing the issues, but less clear and less valued by the general public and the media.

➤ The roles of the sector in providing a longer term perspective, monitoring implementation and enforcement and providing a channel of communication from government to the people and vice versa did not feature in discussions outside of the sector and those experiencing the issues.

Effectiveness & impact of social justice advocacy

In regards to the effectiveness and value of social justice advocacy work by the community and voluntary sector we found that views varied, but the importance of a clear narrow focus and a sophisticated advocacy strategy proved great predictors.

Perceptions of policy makers - Factors that contribute to effective social justice advocacy work

- 1 Have a well thought out advocacy campaign and strategy with clear intermediate goals within a longer term vision with agreed outcomes, underpinned by values of equality, human rights and community development.
- 2 Keep the message simple, but be ambitious and appeal to human interest and concern.
- 3 Empower those affected to be their own advocates through training and professional support.
- 4 Remember that how you win a campaign is as important as what you win. A positive win lays the foundation for future wins – and a certain level of pragmatism is often required
- 5 Be reasonable, constructive and professional when dealing with decision makers. Build relationships of trust, appealing to the best in politicians and public servants can be helpful to their sense of fairness.
- 6 Recognise the value of proven international models and frameworks and harness these whenever possible.
- 7 Where relevant adopt a collaborative approach (access regions/organisations) in order to provide evidence that the identified problems are systemic.
- 8 Take advantage of opportunities and adapt to changes in the external environment when they arise, e.g. a new government, new minister, changing economic conditions.
- 9 Find ways to measure the impact of an advocacy campaign (this will help in terms of harnessing resources and goodwill for future campaigns).

Challenges facing social justice advocacy

From the outset there was a strong sense that the wider economic, social and political context made advocacy work more challenging. What became clear throughout the lifetime of The Advocacy Initiative was that in order to deal with this, the community and voluntary sector needs to be more efficient and innovative in terms of maximising its resources and opportunities to engage with policy-makers using 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies.

A key issue was that neither the community and voluntary sector or its advocacy work was well understood, a fact not helped by the diverse and disparate nature of the sector. Interestingly our opinion polls found a level of positivity and

openness towards the sector with 57% believing that greater involvement of charities and community groups in national policy making would help ensure that vulnerable people are better cared for, with 46% wanting the sector to be more influential in relation to law and policy. In light of this we believe the challenge for the sector is to find ways to harness that positivity and promote greater understanding of its work among the general public and media.

Practice challenges

There was a good degree of consistency in how stakeholders described the challenges facing social justice advocates. These appeared to be significant, but well understood.

Perceptions of policy makers - Key practice challenges for community and voluntary social justice advocacy

- 1 The absence or limited nature of dedicated resources to undertake social justice advocacy work poses a challenge, particularly as policy-makers with limited resources look to the sector to collect hard evidence and relevant data to support the cases they make.
- 2 The fact that many community and voluntary organisations are funded by the state (in part or otherwise) makes their work more challenging as it can impose constraints such as Service Level Agreements and the 'services only' paradigm.
- 3 Making time to get to know and build trust with policy-makers and influencers was recognised as critical in terms of raising credibility of an organisation, but in the current climate this is difficult due to time constraints and reduced opportunities.
- 4 Legitimacy was seen as an issue for the sector especially due to the REHAB and CRC scandals and a clear mandate was suggested as the solution to this issue linked to the connectedness of the organisation to the groups they represent.
- 5 There was a view that the community and voluntary sector are not always clear about how the policy and decision making system works. The challenge is to build its capacity and the capacity of the individual organisations to engage better and build relationships.
- 6 Self-interest was a factor in that those involved in advocacy work are only doing it to promote their organisation or keep their jobs. A way to combat this is to engage in honest reflection and acknowledge the tension of being funded by the state while criticising it.
- 7 Being negative and not overly ambitious were words used to describe the sector along with having unrealistic expectations. Remaining positive, being persistent and monitoring change were seen as critical while a clear vision and focus would help to engage and bring about change.
- 8 Build collaborations and alliances (formally and informally) to lend weight to arguments, develop shared compromise solutions and seek positive change to key policy objectives.
- 9 The sector needs to be flexible and adopt more innovative approaches to influencing policy with and outside the system while responding quickly to unforeseen opportunities.
- 10 Find ways to measure the impact of an advocacy campaign (this will help in terms of harnessing resources and goodwill for future campaigns).

Role of policy-makers in strengthening social justice advocates

Getting more from community and voluntary sector social justice advocacy work not only requires changes within the sector it also requires changes at the levels of policy-makers and influencers.

Role of policy-makers in maximising the impact of social justice advocacy work

- 1 A recognition that there are significant differences in sympathy levels for the groups on whose behalf the sector advocates, making some groups easier to advocate for than others.
- 2 Valuing and recognising the potential of community and voluntary sector advocacy work to bring specialised knowledge and expertise to the policy making and policy implementing processes as they are close to the ground and enjoy a level of trust by marginalised groups.
- 3 Work to build trust and relationships with representatives from the community and voluntary sector in order to broaden their understanding of the advocacy role.
- 4 Recognising and taking action to tackle the financial vulnerability (caused by structural and resourcing issues) of the sector through the application of multiannual funding initiatives and the removing the 'services only' and no advocacy clauses in contracts and agreements.
- 5 Creating new spaces where policy-makers and representatives from the community and voluntary sector can meet and engage in policy making processes in a post-partnership era.
- 6 Both policy-makers and community and voluntary sector leaders encouraging and actively supporting development of community and voluntary sector coalitions and once formed actively engaging and prioritising engagement with these coalitions.
- 7 Being open to doing things differently, adopting more innovative approaches to policy implementation and development.
- 8 Taking time to identify the community and voluntary organisation best qualified/most knowledgeable/most grounded in the issue being addressed and engage with that group.

Source: *'In Other Words': Policy makers' perceptions of social justice advocacy (2013)*

"The Advocacy Initiative has brought me a sense of social justice advocacy that is wider than I had thought. Me personally, it has enabled new relationships, and a better and wider understanding of what social justice is about. It enabled a healthy surfacing of tensions about how we understand social justice advocacy, as individuals."

*Participant in the mid-term evaluation of
The Advocacy Initiative*

Key themes for the future

The synthesis report concludes by drawing out six key learning themes for those concerned with social justice advocacy, which include:

Awareness and understanding

Community and voluntary sector advocacy work is not well understood, particularly outside of policy and decision making circles. The state of social justice advocacy is ad hoc and underdeveloped. The Advocacy Initiative's definition of social justice advocacy, has (if widely adopted by the sector) the capacity to increase levels of understanding of social justice advocacy is and its role in wider civil society.

Credibility and legitimacy

Policy-makers and influencers have concerns in relation to where community and voluntary sector organisations engaged in social justice advocacy work get their mandate and who exactly they represent. Questions have been raised in relation to whether in relation to whether the professionalisation of the community and voluntary sector has led some organisations to become more focused on sustaining the organisation than representing its membership

Relationship building and trust

The issue of a lack of respect arose frequently within work undertaken by The Advocacy Initiative. Research found a lack of acceptance among some policy-makers that the sector had a role and contribution to make to the policy making process. Policy-makers reported being frustrated by the community and voluntary sector as a result of their constant criticism, the lack of acknowledgement when progress is made and a lack of understanding about how the policy making system works and of its unwritten rules and etiquette. In a post-partnership era opportunities for policy-makers and representatives from the community and voluntary sector to meet have become more limited.

Capacity

Skills and knowledge deficits were identified within the community and voluntary sector in relation to their understanding of:

- a) the policy making system
- b) strategic planning
- c) advocacy techniques (including how the voice of their members and service users can be used more in advocacy work)

Resources are required to address these deficits and to ensure that the sector can advocate effectively.

Effective strategies

There is a lack of clarity in relation to what constitutes effective and impactful social justice advocacy work. The sector is not proactive or strategic enough in the way that it approaches its social justice advocacy work. The focus of The Advocacy Initiative has been on the application and use of 'insider' approaches, but there is also scope for the selective use of more 'outsider' approaches. The challenge is to find the balance between 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies.

Independence

The case as to why the state should fund the community and voluntary sector social justice advocacy work is centered around the belief that this work has the capacity to contribute to stronger democracy. There is a concern that state funding for this type of work can undermine independence.

Source: *'In Other Words': Policy makers' perceptions of social justice advocacy (2013)*

www.assessyouradvocacy.ie

Ever wondered how good your advocacy is? What could you be doing better? This tool will help you to assess your advocacy capacity and is for community and voluntary sector organisations who want to take stock of their advocacy capacity and identify ways in which that capacity could be strengthened. Using this tool over time will allow you to measure how your capacity is evolving and changing. It can be used by individuals advocates, advocacy teams, or to compare perspective on capacity within the same organisations.

The tool explores whether you are satisfied with your capacity across a series of indicators. There are two main sections.

*Section 1 deals with core competencies relating to advocacy such as planning, messaging, research, collaboration etc.

*Section 2 explores which strategies and tactics you use, or could use, in your advocacy.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be able to generate a report based on your answers that will provide a summary of:

- (1) Areas you are satisfied with
- (2) Areas that you are relatively happy with, but could strengthen
- (3) Areas that, for you, are a priority to strengthen

This summary should help guide your plans to strengthen your advocacy capacity. It offers a baseline from which to explore capacity growth over time. These results are confidential and specific to you and your organisation.

The Steering Committee of The Advocacy Initiative would like to thank Barnardos for agreeing to be the legacy partner for this tool and will oversee its evolution for the next three years.



*Barnardos
Barnardos National Office
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8*

Are we getting there? A tool for identifying evaluation indicators for social justice advocacy

This tool is for community and voluntary sector organisations that do social justice advocacy. Organisations that seek to influence the development and implementation of public policy on behalf of the groups they represent - organisations that want to know if their work is making a difference. When we set about developing it we discovered a community of advocates who had been individually reflecting on impact and developing strategies for their own organisations. This tool is the product of their collective knowledge.

It is intended to support those doing social justice advocacy to answer one key question: How do we know our advocacy is working? This tool aims to help you and your organisation identify indicators relevant to your work – its objective is to facilitate you in building a suite of indicators from which you can assess the specific impact of your organisation.

The tool is available free of charge on www.advocacyinitiative.ie.

The Steering Committee of the Advocacy Initiative is grateful to the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) who has agreed to be the legacy partner for this tool. DFI will oversee the dissemination and evolution of this tool for the next three years.



*Disability Federation Ireland
Fumbally Court
Fumbally Lane
Dublin 8*

WHAT NEXT?

The Advocacy Initiative never intended to exist beyond 2014. This was a moment in which the sector could reflect on its past, assess its practice and consider its future. It was an opportunity that was grasped by many with both hands. The Advocacy Initiative opened up many possibilities and there was a clear demand for some of the learning and spaces to continue to have meaning for the sector which is why the steering committee devised a legacy strategy.

Following a selection process, seven legacy partners were identified to take on specific projects and initiatives in the coming three years (to 2017). Each of these projects is funded in a small way from the original three year budget. There is no overall coordinating or oversight mechanism for these projects, but the legacy website will act as a central

reference. It is up to each partner to identify the ongoing value and relevance of each project and to shape it accordingly, and to reach out and involve a broad range of social justice advocates.

Some of these projects may not capture the attention of the sector over the whole three years, but we suspect many will. Those that are of value will thrive and those that are no longer relevant will stop. We do not have a plans beyond 2017, but we hope some these projects will seed long term collaborations and ongoing reflection amongst social justice advocates.

If you are interested in any of these plans just contact the relevant legacy partner!

Project

The Advocacy Initiative Legacy Website

The website will be a portal to the learning and research generated by the Initiative and will provide an ongoing resource for social justice advocates.

Are We Getting There? Identifying Indicators For Social Justice Advocacy

This tool and worksheet will support social justice advocacy organisations to develop indicators to measure the impact of their social justice advocacy.

www.assessyouradvocacy.ie

This online questionnaire offers an anonymous resource which facilitates you to take stock of your advocacy capacity. It assesses basic capacities as well as a diverse range of advocacy strategies and tactics.

Opinion Polling

The Advocacy Initiative commissioned two public opinion polls on social justice advocacy. A number of the specific questions asked proved of deep interest to the sector. This legacy project will see the ongoing polling of a small number of the most relevant questions in order to provide a more developed understanding of public opinion on advocacy. The results will be disseminated.

The Knowledge Exchange Fora (KEFs)

The bi-annual KEFs proved one of the most popular and useful activities of the Initiative. There is a strong demand to continue to facilitate such spaces for cross sector exchange and networking. There are two key strands to this legacy.

- Three organisations will each organise one thematic KEF.
- 2-3 Forums will focus on e-campaigning and online strategies. These events may seed the emergence of an e-campaigning forum in Ireland.

Legacy Partner

The Wheel

www.wheel.ie
Contact: ivan@wheel.ie

Disability Federation of Ireland

www.disability-federation.ie
Contact: joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie

Barnardos

www.barnardos.ie
Contact: catherine.mjoyce@barnardos.ie

Focus Ireland

www.focusireland.ie
Contact: mallen@focusireland.ie

Carmichael Centre

www.carmichaelcentre.ie
Contact: diarmaid@carmichaelcentre.ie

Community Platform

www.communityplatform.ie
Contact: robin@eapn.ie

The Wheel

www.wheel.ie
Contact: ivan@wheel.ie

54 Degrees (e-campaigning forum)

www.54degrees.com
Contact: eugeneflynn@54degrees.com

ADVOCACY INITIATIVE RESOURCES

Project Scoping Report

This research examined the literature on advocacy and involved a survey of 170 community and voluntary organisations to assess the extent and nature of advocacy work being undertaken by these organisations.

Statement on Social Justice Advocacy

The working statement on social justice advocacy was developed in order to inform the development of The Advocacy Initiative.

Guide to Social Justice Advocacy Training Opportunities

This online guide was compiled based on research conducted by Irish Charities Tax Research (ICTR) for Atlantic Philanthropies. It was updated in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Mapping of Social Justice Advocacy in Ireland Study (2012) (including five case studies of effective social justice advocacy)

This research examined and documented the breadth, depth and practice of social justice advocacy with the non-profit sector in Ireland. The study was complemented by five case study examples of effective social justice advocacy.

Public Opinion Polling (Nov 2012 & June 2013)

The purpose of these polls (two online surveys of over 1,400 respondents over the age of 16) was to understand what the general public thought of the lobbying, campaigning and social justice advocacy work of the community and voluntary sector. A summary of the findings were produced entitled: *Who Cares About Social Justice Advocacy? What the public thinks.*

Funding Dissent: Research into the Impact of Advocacy on State Funding of Voluntary and Community Organisations (2013)

This study explored the link between advocacy and funding in both an international and Irish contexts. It found in the Irish context inconsistent practice by government, with both provision for and prohibition of advocacy work. This report also sets out the 'rational case' for advocacy and its role in a democracy.

'In Other Words': Policy Makers' Perceptions of Social Justice Advocacy (2013)

This study (conducted using a participatory research approach which involved seven social justice advocates in the research process) explored 33 policy makers and influencer's views on social justice advocacy.

"Are we paying for that?" - Government Funding and Social Justice Advocacy (2014)

This study explored the funding relationship between the state and voluntary and community organisations engaged in public policy advocacy in Ireland from the perspective of the voluntary and community sector.

The Regulatory Environment for Social Justice Advocacy in Ireland (2013)

This study offers an overview of the regulations, both formal and informal, which affect the social justice advocacy environment in Ireland. It also anticipates the challenges that will be posed for the sector with the introduction of legislation in relation to the regulation of lobbyists and the Charities Act 2009.

www.assessyouradvocacy.ie

This online tool was designed to help support community and voluntary sector organisations and coalitions a) measure their advocacy capacity, and b) identify activity areas that need to be strengthened.

Are we getting there?

This tool sets out a framework to allow advocates and their organisation to identify their own indicators for effectiveness.

Outputs from the various Knowledge Exchange Fora

Various reports, presentations and videos from each of the six Knowledge Exchange Forums. The topics covered included: e-advocacy and social media tools; good practices; participation; collaboration; and creative approaches and tactics for social justice advocates.

Guest Blogs

20 guest blogs from a variety of individuals from across a range of sectors addressing themes relevant to the community and voluntary sector and their social justice advocacy work.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

The Advocacy Initiative was a result of a collective vision and would not have been possible without very significant commitment of time and energy of those who participated in the Steering Committee. Thanks!

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David Lynch (Community Worker's Cooperative) for making sure we did not lose sight of the ultimate purpose of advocacy, no matter how differently we might approach it.

Gerry Mangan for his ambition for The Advocacy Initiative.

Sheila Nordon (Irish Charities Tax Reform) for being positive and realistic (even at the same time!)

Brid O'Brien (Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed) for seeing around corners.

Orla O'Connor (National Women's Council of Ireland) for her insight and not being afraid to go first.

Diarmaid Ó'Corrbaí (Carmichael Centre) for making the connections and to **Caroline Egan** and **Ava Battles** for making the connections possible.

Joan O'Donnell (Disability Federation of Ireland) for opening up whole new worlds.

Siobhan O'Donoghue (Community Platform) for changing her mind!

Kathleen O'Meara (Irish Cancer Society) for reminding us who the audience really is.

Niamh Randall (Simon Communities of Ireland) for articulating the value and to **Patrick Burke** for getting us started.

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Tanya Ward (Children's Rights Alliance) for seeing the tangible and asking some hard questions, and **Edel Quinn** for jumping straight in.

And finally...

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Bills would not have been paid without work of those in the finance department of the SVP National Office and the staff would not have been hired without the work of the human resource team in Focus Ireland.

We worked with many different consultants and experts the results of The Advocacy Initiative are in no small part a consequence of their collective expertise and skill.

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Anna Visser & Clodagh O'Brien
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