

Finding Your Way around the Community and Voluntary Sector

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Hilary Curley



Combat Poverty Agency *working for a poverty-free Ireland*



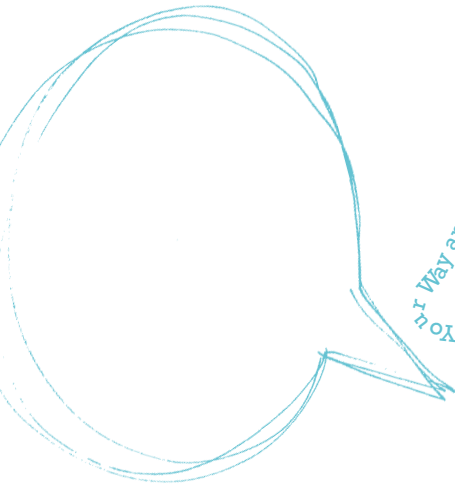
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**Finding  
Your Way  
around the  
Community  
and Voluntary  
Sector**

# Finding Your Way around the Community and Voluntary Sector

Hilary Curley



Finding Your Way around the Community and Voluntary Sector  
**Family  
Resource Centre**  
**city/county**  
**community**  
**voluntary**  
**non governmental**  
**organisation**  
**National Economic  
and Social Council**  
**voluntary**  
**community**  
**Strategic**  
**Policy Committee**  
**National Development**  
**European Union**

 **Combat Poverty  
Agency** *working for a  
poverty-free Ireland*



  
**Citizens Information Board**  
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In the first edition of *Finding your Way around the Community and Voluntary Sector*, two errors were made.

Congress Centres Networks was incorrectly titled '*Congress Centres for the Unemployed*'. Congress Centres Networks' web address is [www.ictu.ie/about/centres.html](http://www.ictu.ie/about/centres.html).

CORI Justice's listing was also incorrect. CORI Justice (the Conference of Religious of Ireland) is a social partner and represents more than 135 religious congregations with 11,000 members in 1,300 communities throughout Ireland. CORI Justice's core programmes focus on (1) public policy, (2) enabling and empowering, (3) spirituality and (4) advocacy and communication.

We apologise to Congress Centres Networks and CORI Justice for any inconvenience caused.



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## Glossary of Terms

<b>CV</b>	Community and Voluntary
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>CDP</b>	Community Development Project
<b>FRC</b>	Family Resource Centre
<b>NESC</b>	National Economic and Social Council
<b>NESF</b>	National Economic and Social Council
<b>CORI</b>	Conference of Religious in Ireland
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NAPinclusion</b>	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
<b>RIA</b>	Regulatory Impact Analysis
<b>SPC</b>	Strategic Policy Committee
<b>CDB</b>	City/County Development Board
<b>SIM Group</b>	Social Inclusion Measures Group
<b>RAPID</b>	Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development

**Keep Notes:**







## Preface


In recent years, the range of opportunities for local and national community and voluntary (CV) organisations to participate in structures and processes relating to public policy has significantly expanded.

At the same time, the number of CV groups involved in tackling social exclusion issues such as poverty, educational disadvantage, health inequalities, area deprivation, drug use and so on has increased. Many of these groups also pioneer and innovate ways of preventing and reducing poverty at local level.

In these contexts, Combat Poverty in association with the Citizens Information Board and The Wheel ([www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie)) commissioned this publication, Finding Your Way around the Community and Voluntary Sector. It is intended as a resource for public officials whose day-to-day work involves them engaging with CV groups.

The guide:

- aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the role, structure and composition of the CV sector working on issues relating to poverty, social inclusion and equality
- outlines the current Irish policy context that supports an active relationship and dialogue between the State and groups in civil society, specifically the CV sector working on poverty and social exclusion issues

- 
- offers guidance to public officials on engagement with the CV sector on policy design, formulation, implementation and evaluation relating to poverty and social exclusion.

The resource was commissioned under Combat Poverty's three-year Having Your Say Programme 2005-2007 ([see www.combatpoverty.ie/havingyoursay](http://www.combatpoverty.ie/havingyoursay)). The aim of the programme is to strengthen the voices and practices of people and communities living in poverty in the development and implementation of anti-poverty policies and programmes.

The resource does not provide a contacts directory or description of groups within the CV sector. A number of these are available locally and nationally. The Citizens Information Board publishes a Directory of National Voluntary Organisations, which is a comprehensive listing of up to 600 national organisations in the CV sector with full details of their roles, objectives, contact details and resources available. The directory, which includes details of State and public agencies of interest to the sector, is also available online at [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie).

Combat Poverty, the Citizens Information Board and The Wheel are delighted to acknowledge Hilary Curley's professionalism and excellence in producing this guide.

October 2007



## Section 1: The Community and Voluntary Sector Explained


Community and voluntary (CV) groups engage in a wide range of activities from sporting to social services to arts.<sup>1</sup> They can be organised around a particular geographic community e.g. a parish or a town or a county or organised around a community of interest e.g. women's groups; gay and lesbian groups; Travellers etc. Groups may also transcend both – groups working on an area basis that are also focused on the development of particular target groups e.g. Traveller development in County Longford.

The activities of CV organisations fall under a range of headings:

- Health: mental health, crisis intervention and other health services
- Social service: general social services, emergency and relief, income support and maintenance, information provision
- Development/Housing: economic, social and community development, housing
- Employment and training

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<sup>1</sup> The terms 'non-governmental organisation' (NGO) and 'non-profit organisation' are often used to refer to the community and voluntary sector. Donoghue, Anheier and Salmon (1999) define the community and voluntary sector as a sub-set of the wider non-profit sector which also includes organisations like hospitals, schools etc. In this Guide, the term 'community and voluntary sector' will be used in line with its use in the White Paper (see page 54)

- 
- Law, advocacy and politics: advocacy, law and legal services
  - International: aid and development
  - Sports and recreation
  - Education and research
  - Culture, arts and heritage
  - Religion
  - Charitable foundations.<sup>2</sup>

The term 'community and voluntary sector' implies one homogenous group which is somewhat misleading. The sector is extremely diverse with a constant dynamic ebb and flow within it as new groups set up and others fold, as new members come and go and as groups evolve to take account of new needs and issues that present themselves.

This dynamism is what makes the sector so relevant and central to an active and engaged civil society. But it is also this aspect that can make engagement more difficult for public and civil servants.

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<sup>2</sup> This list is extracted from the work done by Donoghue, Anheier and Salmon (1999) and later work by Donoghue, Prizeman, O'Regan and Noel (2006). The authors used the International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations and amended it to more accurately reflect the Irish situation



## Development of the Sector


The term 'community and voluntary sector' has developed organically over the last number of decades, much like the sector itself. In times past, it may have been easier to distinguish between the 'voluntary sector' and the 'community sector'.

The former was primarily involved in the direct provision of health and social services such as hospitals, education, care for the elderly and was usually carried out by religious orders. They tended to be large organisations reliant on charitable donations and fundraising.

The latter emerged with the co-operative movement where the concept of 'community self-help' motivated many agricultural communities and this was advanced in Ireland during the mid 1900s by Muintir na Tire. The groups involved in this sector tended to be smaller in scale.

The community sector began to grow as the 'self-help' concept began to take hold. This change of focus was facilitated in part by the European Union (EU) during the 1980s, which provided funding through a number of 'Poverty Programmes' promoting this change through self-help philosophy. The concepts of participation, empowerment and bottom-up development began to make their way into mainstream language and this approach was embraced by the term 'community development'.

While it is useful to draw the historic distinction between the two strands, in reality they have become inter-twined and grown together over the last few decades. Each has adopted features of the other such as encouraging volunteering and participation, provision of services,



advocating and campaigning and empowering people most excluded from society to get their voices heard.

The introduction of social partnership at the end of the 1980s altered the relationship significantly between the Government and the sector. The CV sector was not involved as official national social partners until 1996 which produced the fourth social partnership agreement ('Partnership 2000'). The issues addressed through this policy forum were broadened beyond tax and wage agreements to address social and economic development.

Throughout the 1990s, the partnership policies of the Government were expanded as new partnership structures and programmes were rolled out at local and national level. Groups in the CV sector were drawing in more and more resources through these partnership programmes, through EU funding strands, Government funding and other sources such as philanthropic foundations or fundraising.

The increased access to funds also changed the way the CV sector conducted itself and its business. It allowed groups, some for the first time, to employ part-time or full-time staff aided by the introduction of active labour market schemes such as Community Employment, which was funded through the national employment and training agency, FÁS.

The relationship between local and national Government and the CV sector has changed dramatically in 30 years. The introduction of social partnership, the community development approaches, the influence of the EU, the recognition of voluntary activity – these all served to bring about significant changes in the language and practice of Government.



## Characteristics of the CV sector

There is estimated to be over 20,000 organisations around the country within the CV sector.<sup>3</sup> At first glance, they may appear to have little in common, but they do in fact share a number of common characteristics:


- Organised: distinguished from informal or ad hoc, purely social or familial groupings by having an institutional presence or structure
- Non-profit distributing: they do not return profits to their managers or to a set of owners
- Independent (private or non-governmental): in particular from Government and other public authorities
- Voluntary: they contain some element of voluntary or unpaid participation.
- Self-governing: they are in control of their own affairs
- Contributing to the Public Good: their activity must be aimed, at least in part, at contributing to the public good.<sup>4</sup>

There is a tendency sometimes to label all organisations operating at local level as the CV sector. But a distinction needs to be drawn between partnership-type organisations set up on foot of Government

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3 The Wheel (2005), *Discussion Document Building a Vibrant Civil Culture through Citizen Engagement*

4 Government of Ireland (2000), *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*. Pg. 77



policy and groups that emerge organically on foot of an identified need or needs.

The former, initiated by Government and sometimes called the 'local development sector' serves as a mechanism through which CV groups can get involved in policy and practice at a local level. The latter emerges usually from the ground up where people identify their own needs – a gap in service delivery, a desire to have their voice heard in development of their area, a facility required – and form an organisation. Down the line, they may seek resources, funding and linkages to assist them in their efforts.

## Different types of CV organisation

It is practically impossible to fit the range and diversity of CV organisations into one simple classification system. A framework has been developed, however, that goes in some way towards identifying the type of organisations that operate within the sector. It was developed by Faughan in 1990 and is still used to this present day:

**Mutual Support and Self-help Organisations:** based on exchange and involvement around a common interest or need. The services that they provide are based around support, information and counselling. Many are national organisations organised as a network of local groups around the country e.g. Victim Support.

**Development Organisations:** focused on developing a particular geographic community through collective action. The process followed is central and involves local people identifying their own needs, determining how these can be met and combining resources to respond to these needs. Their concern for citizens' rights, self-determination and development distinguishes them from locally





based service organisations. Common examples include community councils or tenants' associations.

**Resource and Service-Providing Organisations:** play a major role in either complementing or supplementing Government provision or they act as the dominant or sole provider of a particular service. This is the largest category of voluntary activity in Ireland with the largest number of volunteers and people employed and it generates substantial finance from a variety of sources, e.g. Irish Cancer Society.

**Representative and Co-ordinating Organisations:** these involve organisations acting as umbrella groups and are often national bodies acting as a central co-ordinating and resource agent to a membership of affiliated organisations. They often operate at one step removed from the grass roots activity in which the affiliated organisations are involved and as a liaison point for Government and public relations. There is a high priority on identifying and representing the views of affiliated organisations and trying to influence public policy development, e.g. The Wheel, National Youth Council.

**Campaigning Bodies:** active campaigning may be a dimension of the work of representative organisations or may be the dominant role of an organisation. In the latter case, the primary or exclusive thrust is to bring about change through influencing legislation, policy and practice. They may be national federations where groups coalesce around a particular issue, e.g. Children's Rights Alliance.

**Funding Organisations:** charitable foundations, trusts and funds which raise funds and distribute them to particular programmes or initiatives e.g. Atlantic Philanthropies.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Boyle and Butler (2003), *Autonomy v. Accountability: Managing government funding of voluntary and community organizations*, Pg. 8



## The Organisation of the CV Sector

One of the key defining characteristics (referred to in section 1.2 above) is that of its independence – there is no over-arching representative body that organises or manages CV groups. There is no one single point of engagement within the CV sector itself and between the CV sector and the Government. It differs from Northern Ireland and the UK in that regard, where an umbrella body for the sector has been established in each jurisdiction for some time.

While the strengths and weaknesses of this set-up can be debated back and forth, the reality is that CV groups have adapted to this environment. As a result, the sector has developed organically and the engagement within the sector and with Government has developed in a similar manner.

So how do CV organisations organise themselves and operate? Much of it depends on the groups themselves and what works for them.

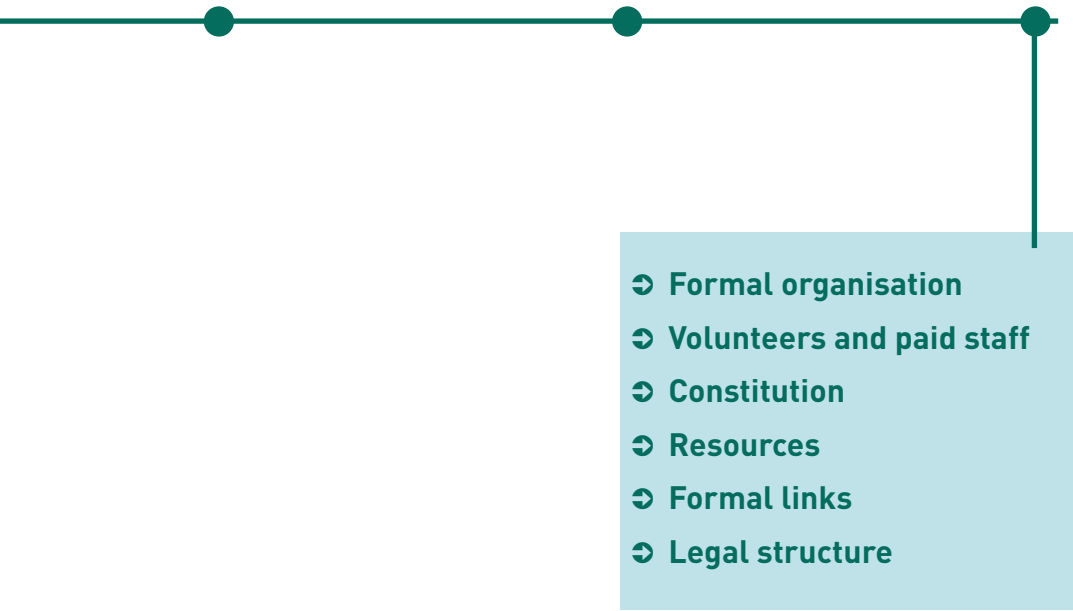
What determines a group's development depends on a range of factors, e.g. the needs of the community, the capacity of volunteers, the energy and time available and the availability of resources. These factors will vary from group to group and how a group organises itself and manages these factors will determine the group's development.

This can be best illustrated on a continuum (see Fig 1). At one end is a small-scale group, comprising people that have come together relatively informally to address a need in the community consisting only of volunteers with no legal structure, no constitution, no resources and no formal links outside their group with other CV groups or with Government.

# Fig. 1 CV Sector Continuum

- ↻ Informal organisation
- ↻ Volunteers
- ↻ No constitution
- ↻ No resources
- ↻ No formal links
- ↻ No legal structure



- 
- ⇒ **Formal organisation**
  - ⇒ **Volunteers and paid staff**
  - ⇒ **Constitution**
  - ⇒ **Resources**
  - ⇒ **Formal links**
  - ⇒ **Legal structure**



At the opposite end is the large-scale formally organised group complete with paid workers, programme resources, constituted as a legal structure and linked into local and national social partnership networks.

Generally groups will fall within either end of this continuum. They can enter and exit at different points. They will move up or down the spectrum depending on different factors, e.g. whether they gain or lose resources or whether they make formal links with partnership structures.

It is this flat structure, along with the constantly shifting ebb and flow within the sector, that often proves the most challenging to civil and public servants in their effort to engage with it.

## **Funding and Support**

Central to a group's development is that of resources and support. CV groups are particularly creative at sourcing funding for their work and there are a range of funding streams made available by the Government via departments, State agencies and local government.




## Examples of Government Funding Streams

Department	Examples of Funding Streams
Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grants for locally based CV organisations</li><li>• Community support for older people</li><li>• Dormant accounts</li><li>• Young People Facilities and Services Fund</li><li>• Rural Social Scheme</li></ul>
Justice, Equality and Law Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme</li><li>• Equality for women</li><li>• Community-based CCTV</li><li>• Integration of immigrants</li></ul>
Education and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Millennium Fund for Educational Disadvantage</li></ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rural Transport Programme</li></ul>
Health and Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HSE areas provide funding for CV groups locally to promote health and care in the community</li></ul>



Department	Examples of Funding Streams
Environment, Heritage and Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support local city and county councils which administer small-scale grants</li></ul>
Enterprise, Trade and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Employment Schemes</li><li>• Jobs Initiative</li><li>• Local Training Initiative</li></ul>
Social and Family Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family Resource Centres</li><li>• Money Advice Budgeting Service</li></ul>





In the past, CV groups have been particularly successful at sourcing funding directly from the EU through various initiatives although these opportunities have now become more limited. Groups also source funds through their own fundraising events and private charitable foundations.

There are also a range of organisations that support the development of the sector through non-financial means: information; training; advice; and capacity building.

Some of this support comes directly from Government through State agencies such as the Citizens Information Board, its constituent local Citizens Information Services and the Combat Poverty Agency.

Other support comes from other organisations within the sector itself usually through national federations or networks (sometimes called 'umbrella' groups). These organisations operate primarily at national level and act as a central co-ordinating and resource to a local membership base (see page 84).<sup>6</sup>

They often take on the additional role of representing their members' views and advocating on their behalf at central level. These federations or networks have a number of funding sources: membership subscriptions; Government funding; and income generated from activities such as training or publications.

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<sup>6</sup> Some of these organisations in turn are affiliated to international organisations e.g. European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is a national network with a number of affiliated groups around the country who are engaged in anti-poverty work. EAPN Ireland is in turn affiliated to the European Wide Anti-Poverty Network which takes an active part in the development of social policy at EU level





## Connecting the CV sector at local and national level

CV groups may be independent entities but strong formal and informal links have been developed between organisations at local and national level.

### National Level

Many local groups choose to engage in policy development at national level for a very simple reason: the range of functions attributable to local government are quite limited – housing, local roads, local planning and development, waste and water and recreation and amenities. The council budget is also limited.

The larger issues affecting local communities are dealt with primarily at central level, particularly those involved in social inclusion work such as education, health, employment and social protection. So in order to effect change in these areas locally, it is necessary for groups to establish vertical links to the policy makers at national level.

National networks and federations mentioned in the previous section play an important role in this regard. While they are not the only mechanism through which local groups can link in nationally, they do provide a bridge for local groups to influence policy at national level. They offer opportunities to groups looking to participate in policy development but are limited in their efforts because of already stretched resources and capacity issues.



A recent study by Combat Poverty Agency on the policy work of Community Development Projects (CDP), Family Resource Centres (FRC) and local partnerships found that policy work is viewed as central and critical to the work of the projects but doing so is a significant drain on resources and energy and also requires significant capacity on the part of the organisation. The table below provides an insight into the many policy connections made by a CDP at local, regional and national level.

*(see Table 1 overleaf)*

## Table 1: Map of Policy Areas and Mechanisms in which CDP's Engage


Community Development Programmes	Policy Arenas
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Local Partnership company and sub-committees</li> <li>➤ Drugs Task Force</li> <li>➤ Local Area Network on Violence Against Women</li> <li>➤ RAPID Area Implementation Team</li> </ul>
Local Authority/ County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees</li> <li>➤ Local Authority Strategic Policy Committees</li> <li>➤ County Development Board and sub-structures/ working groups e.g. Social Inclusion Measures Group and sub-committees</li> <li>➤ Community Forums</li> <li>➤ County Childcare Committees and sub-committees</li> </ul>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regional Planning Committee on Violence Against Women and sub-committees</li> <li>➤ Committees convened by statutory agency and semi-state bodies e.g. FAS Advisory Committee on Disability in one region, HSE sub-committee on respite care, suicide etc.</li> </ul>
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ National Policy consultations usually led by specific departments or agencies e.g. Office for Social Inclusion and NAPinclusion; DSFA consultations on family; HSE consultations; DJELR on National Plan for Women Presentations and submissions to Joint Oireachtas Committees</li> <li>➤ National Advisory Committee of CDP Programme</li> </ul>
EU/ international	

Source: Combat Poverty Agency (2006), *Communities, Voices and Change*



## Policy Mechanisms

- Issue-specific networks/forums (Traveller-specific focus; forum space for Travellers; site forum meetings; disability forums; asylum seekers; elderly; ethnic groups, etc.)
- Local Community Development Project Network
- Public forums convened on particular issues
- Direct links with other organisations
- May have an equality or anti-poverty platform within the Community Forum e.g. Laois Anti-Poverty Strategy steering committee, South Dublin Community Platform
- CDP Network
- Membership of another organisation e.g. Donegal Community Workers Co-operative
- Participation in consultations organised by VEC, HSE, Local Authority, CDB on their activities and plans.
- Cross border forums (anti-poverty)
- CDP regional forum/networks (geographical and issue-focused e.g. anti-racism/integration, gay and lesbian equality)
- Issue-based initiatives e.g. health service delivery, European Forum on Women
- Organisation-based initiatives e.g. ITM regional network
- National organisation issue focused consultations e.g. CWC, EAPN, NCCRI & Integrating Ireland, NWCI
- Membership of national organizations and participation in their policy activities e.g. CWC, ITM, NTWF, Pavee Point, Residents Against Racism, NCCRI, NCCWN, NWCI, Banulacht, NAMHI, Age and Opportunity and others
- Participation in Combat Poverty 'Building Healthy Communities' initiative
- Through membership of organisations e.g. EAPN
- Transnational sectoral links



There are a number of different connections through which the CV sector engage with national policy development and implementation through: (i) social partnership structures; (ii) national and Government department committees; (iii) elected representatives; (iv) department liaison; and (v) public debate (although this is not addressed in the Guide).


### *(i) Social Partnership Structures*

Social partnership agreements have been central to the development of economic and social policy since the late 1980s. The social partnership composition is depicted diagrammatically on Fig 2 along with the list of groups which make up the CV pillar.

The inclusion of CV groups as one of the four pillars in the social partnership process has provided a formal forum through which concerns of the sector may be articulated and negotiated in the context of national policy agreements.

But it is often assumed, incorrectly, that all CV groups are linked into social partnership and therefore the CV pillar represents the views of all CV groups around the country.

The CV pillar is primarily a group of organisations which the Government invites to engage with it at the beginning of every new social partnership negotiation. It is more like a proxy for, rather than a representative of, the sector. The pillar elects a Secretariat – one of the member groups – whose job it is to co-ordinate information among all the CV pillar members.



The social partnership agreements have a range of mechanisms, advisory committees and forums in which the groups involved in the CV pillar are represented. These include:

- The National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) – set up in the 1970s to analyse and report to the Government on strategy issues affecting social and economic development. It has a specific role in preparing the ground for new social partnership agreements.
- The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) – set up to provide advice to the Government on policies to achieve greater equality and social inclusion. It also facilitates public consultation on policy matters referred to it by the Government from time to time.
- The Steering Group – the group charged with overseeing the implementation of the social partnership agreement. There are often smaller working groups set up to look at the implementation of specific parts of the agreement upon which the CV pillar is also represented.

**Fig. 2 Social Partnership Structure**



## Community & Voluntary Pillar

- ➔ CORI
- ➔ The Wheel
- ➔ Irish Rural Link
- ➔ Disability Federation of Ireland
- ➔ National Association of Building Co-operatives
- ➔ Irish Council for Social Housing
- ➔ Age Action
- ➔ St. Vincent de Paul
- ➔ Protestant Aid
- ➔ Community Platform



**Government**

**Community &  
Voluntary  
Pillar**

- ➔ National Women's Council
- ➔ Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed
- ➔ Congress Centres for the Unemployed
- ➔ National Youth Council
- ➔ Carers Association
- ➔ Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
- ➔ Children's Rights Alliance





## Members of the CV pillar in National Social Partnership

### **CORI (Conference of Religious in Ireland) –**

provides social analysis on a range of societal issues including that of poverty and exclusion. It is similar to a think tank and does not have a membership base.

[www.cori.ie/justice](http://www.cori.ie/justice)

### **The Wheel –**

a support and representative body connecting community and voluntary organisations across Ireland. It provides information, support programmes and advocacy for the sector. It has over 500 community and voluntary group members around the country.

[www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie)

### **Irish Rural Link –**

represents the views of rural community groups and associations with over 250 group members.

[www.irishrurallink.ie](http://www.irishrurallink.ie)

### **Disability Federation of Ireland –**

is the national support body and advocate for voluntary disability organisations which provide services to people with disabilities. It represents over 150 voluntary disability organisations.

[www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

*(continued overleaf)*





**National Association of Building Co-operatives Society –**

represents the co-operative housing movement and is concerned with the relief of housing needs, poverty and deprivation using co-operative organisational principles.

[www.nabco.ie](http://www.nabco.ie)

**Irish Council for Social Housing –**

was formed by housing and hostel organisations and acts as a national representative, promotional, information and advisory federation with over 200 affiliated housing associations.

[www.icsh.ie](http://www.icsh.ie)

**Age Action Ireland –**

the national organisation on ageing and older people bringing together organisations and individuals including older people and carers of older people.

[www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie)

**St. Vincent de Paul –**

one of the larger volunteer organisations promoting the rights of the poorest members of society and providing services throughout the country. They have over 8,000 volunteers.

[www.svp.ie](http://www.svp.ie)

**Protestant Aid –**

works to ease poverty among the most disadvantaged in society by providing services, aid and support through financial aid and other measures.

[www.protestantaid.org](http://www.protestantaid.org)

*(continued overleaf)*



**National Women's Council –**

the national representative voice for women's groups and women in Ireland with over 167 affiliated group members.

[www.nwci.ie](http://www.nwci.ie)

**Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed –**

the national federation of local centres and groups concerned with combating unemployment. It comprises almost 200 local unemployed centres, community development organisations and branches of unemployed people throughout the country.

[www.inou.ie](http://www.inou.ie)

**Congress Centres for the Unemployed –**

there are 27 unemployed centres set up as part of the work of the trade union movement across the country providing a range of supports, training, information to people who are unemployed and also those in employment.

[www.resourcecentres.org](http://www.resourcecentres.org)

**Community Platform –**

a network of 28 groups that promotes an anti-poverty voice in the social partnership process.

[www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie)


**National Youth Council –**

the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland with over 40 national youth organisations members.

[www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

*(continued overleaf)*





**Carers Association** – a national voluntary organisation for and of family carers in the home established to lobby and advocate on behalf of carers. The Carers Association has 16 Resource Centres and two Service Projects from which it delivers a range of services.

[www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com)

**Irish Senior Citizens Parliament** – provides a national voice for older people. It has over 300 affiliated organisations with a total membership of 80,000. The Parliament is non-party political, non-sectarian, non-profit making and is concerned with promoting the interests of retired and older people.

[www.seniors.ie](http://www.seniors.ie)

**Children’s Rights Alliance** – a coalition of NGOs concerned with the rights and welfare of children and young people in Ireland. The alliance set up primarily to secure the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Ireland.

[www.childrensrights.ie](http://www.childrensrights.ie)



### *(ii) National and Government Department Advisory Committees*

There are a range of advisory and monitoring committees set up at individual department and agency level to advise and assist in the development and management of particular policies or programmes. The establishment and membership of these groups is at the discretion of each department or agency and can be set up at national, regional or local level. Examples of such national committees include:

- The National Advisory Committee on Drugs – established by the Government to help improve knowledge and understanding of problem drug use. It advises the Government on problem drug use in Ireland and comprises members from the statutory, medical, CV and academic research sectors.
- The Social Inclusion Forum – an annual meeting convened every year by the National Economic and Social Forum, open to all CV groups and individuals who may have views on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion – see page 48). The views of the meeting are drawn together into a report that is submitted to the Office for Social Inclusion.
- The National Disability Strategy Stakeholders Monitoring Group was established by the Government to monitor progress on the overall implementation of the disability strategy. Its membership is drawn from the Disability Stakeholder Group and officials across a range of Government departments.





### *(iii) Elected Representative System*

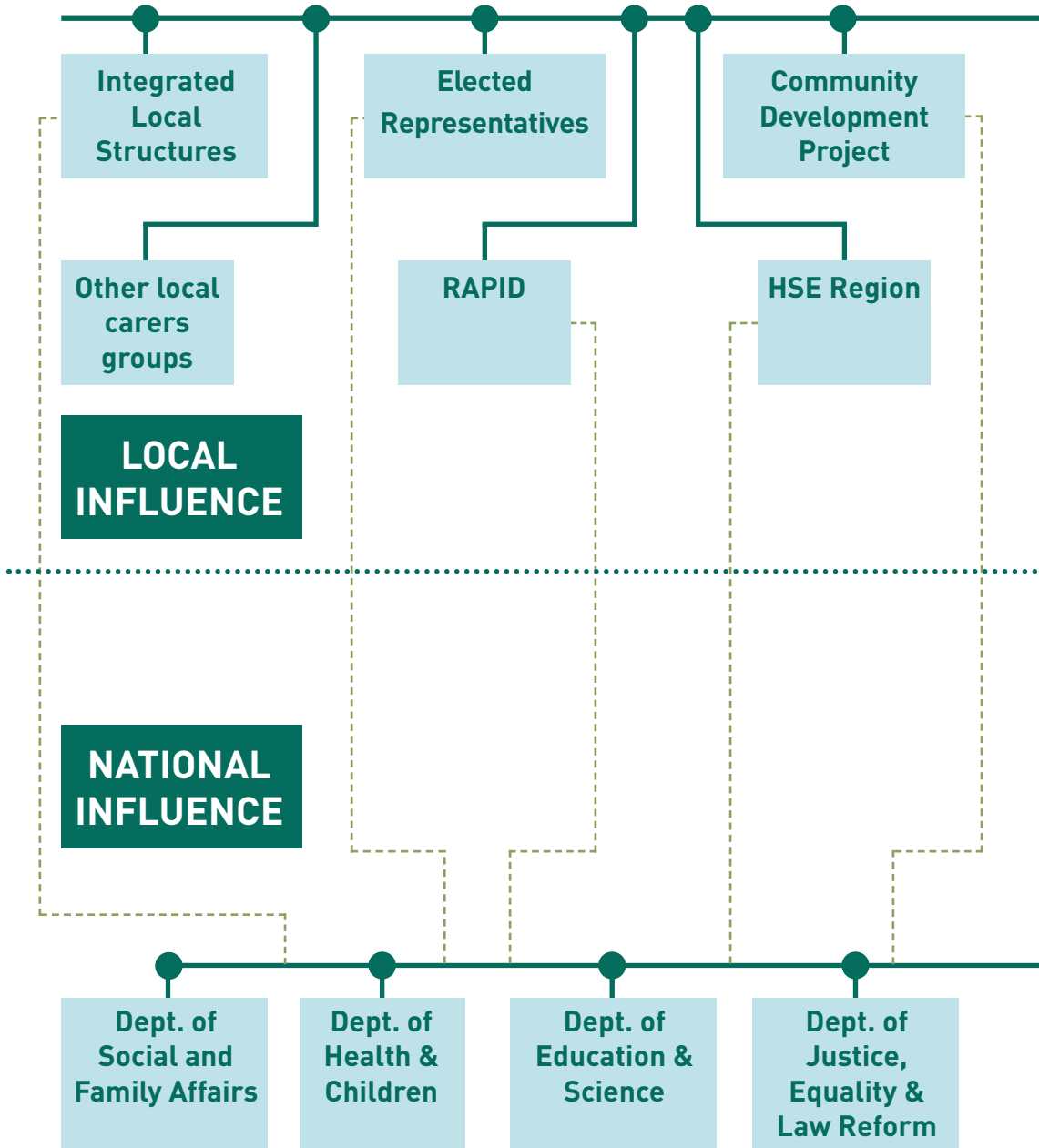
The CV sector engages directly with the elected representative system at local, national and EU level on a formal and informal basis through various channels:

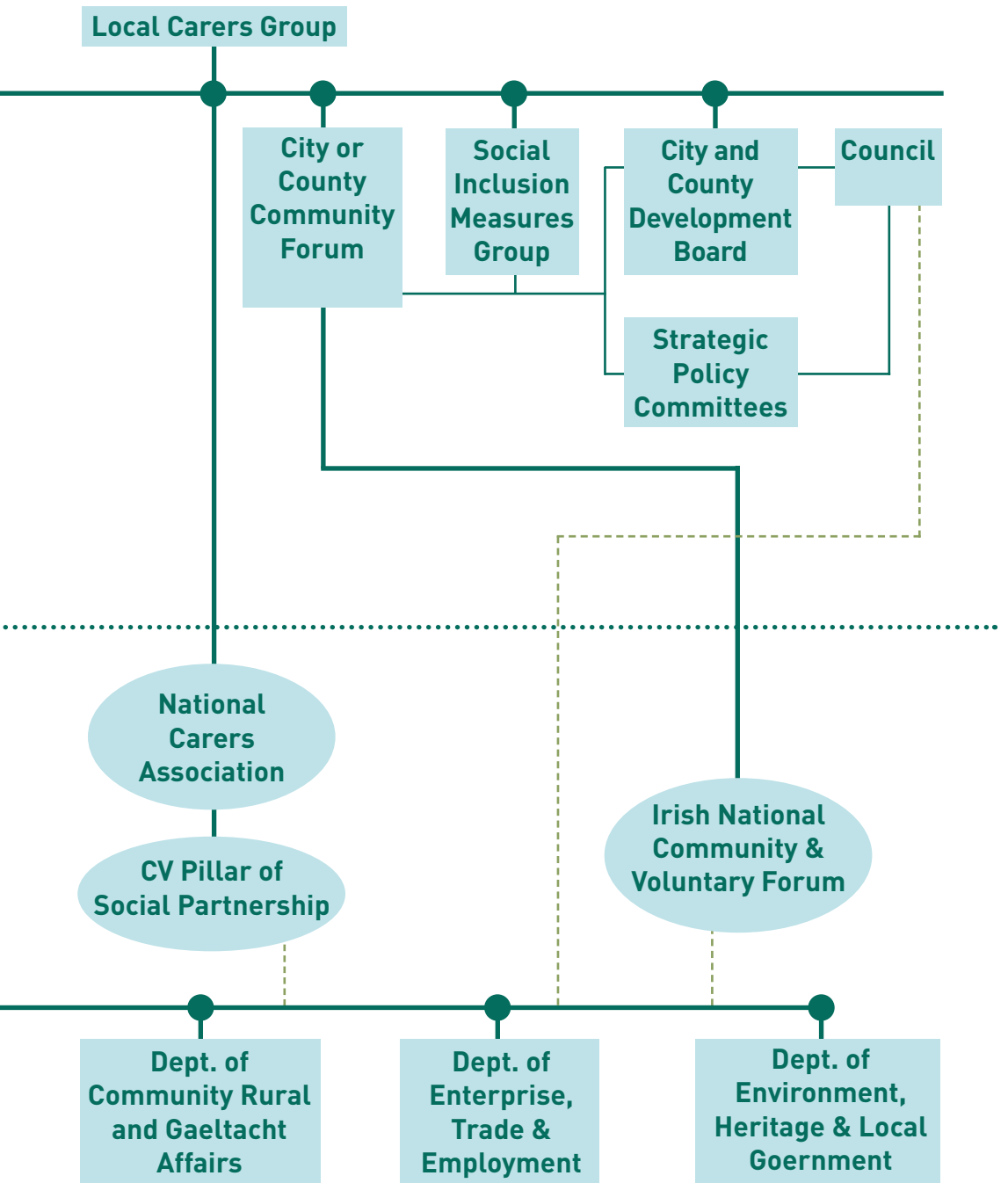
- Many organisations use their elected representatives to pose parliamentary questions and to raise issues during debates and committee meetings.
- Organisations run events, conferences, publication launches and invite political representatives to attend.
- Organisations may seek a meeting or regular meetings with Ministers or other political representatives.
- Organisations look to engage with Oireachtas and Senate committees either through submissions or meetings.

### *(iv) Department Liaison*

Very often there is frequent formal and informal contact between CV organisations and civil/public servants. This includes interaction around information, policy development and addressing the implementation of policy through various programmes, services, initiatives etc.

**Fig. 3 Example of Horizontal & Vertical Links**









### Fig 3: Example of Horizontal and Vertical Connections

A local carers group has a number of different opportunities to connect within the sector and with Government at both local and national level.

#### *Local Level*

- The group can work away by itself not having any formal links with local development or partnership-type structures.
- It can link in at local level through the community forum which helps link it into the planning processes of the council. There may be hundreds of groups in each county and city forum so it can be difficult to get a specific issue or voice heard.
- It could be involved with the county-wide integrated local development company or urban-based partnership<sup>7</sup> which has identified carers as one of its target groups. It may be involved with the local Community Development Programme and the RAPID programme, depending on its location and objectives.

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<sup>7</sup> This is a working title given to the new county-wide structures currently being established throughout the country as part of Government policy. It is envisaged, through what is called 'the cohesion process', that area-based partnership companies, community partnership companies and LEADER companies will form one county-wide organisation (except in city areas) through which various development programmes will be administered. An official decision on the name of these new structures has not yet been taken





### *National Level:*

- At national level it could link with the Carers Association who in turn has links directly into various Government departments and advisory committees.
- It could link into national social partnership via the Carers Association which has a seat at the social partnership table as part of the CV pillar.
- It could contact elected representatives in the Dail and Seanad directly with issues, questions or concerns.

The group can choose any or all of these connections or 'plug points' and any of these connections are possible if any group chooses to pursue them. But what it also demonstrates is the amount of time, resources and energy it takes to be part of the policy making process. Whether a group decides to or not depends very much on resources, objectives and their capacity to do so.



## Local Level

There are many groups working on the ground who are not linked into any formal structures, either within the sector or within Government and yet who network and interact informally with each other on an everyday basis. This is particularly true if they are involved in addressing the same concerns, for example, if a youth group is running an early school leaving programme, it is likely to link in with the local development organisation, a family resource centre or a local Traveller organisation.

These horizontal linkages are vital for support, information and addressing common issues. Some groups never want to move beyond this informal level of networking as it suits their purpose. For others, there are a range of structures at the local level where they can link to influence local policy and planning: (i) Local Government; (ii) City and County Development Boards; (iii) Community Fora; and (iv) Local development sector.

### *(i) Local Government*

The ongoing local government reform process reflects the social partnership process at national level and the learning gleaned through operation of local partnership structures and programmes operating around the country. It opened the door of the Council's activities to involvement by local CV groups through the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). These committees were set up to improve policy making and development within each local authority and for the first time involved the CV sector in this process. One third of the membership of these SPCs is made up of people other than local councillors such as CV sector, employers' organisations and representatives from local third-level institutions.





### *(ii) City and County Development Boards (CDBs)*


The local government reform process also led to the establishment of the CDBs, again modelled on social partnership. These Boards involve local government, local development sector, CV sector, employers, unions and farmers, similar to national level arrangements.

The CDBs are an independent body but operate under the aegis of the local authority in the area and are supported by the Community and Enterprise section within the county or city council complete with director and staff. Each CDB produces a multi-annual strategy statement setting economic and social targets for their city and county in the years ahead.

There are a number of committees operating under the CDB structure. Given the focus of this Guide, it is worth mentioning one of those committees in particular – the Social Inclusion Measures group (SIM). This was set up as a sub-committee of each CDB to co-ordinate social inclusion activity in each city and county. Members include all CV groups and statutory bodies concerned with social inclusion activity at a local level.

### *(iii) Community Fora*

The CV representatives on local authority structures (and increasingly on other local representative structures) are drawn from a Community Forum in operation in each city and county. These fora were set up as result of Government policy as part of the local government reform process and are supported by the Community and Enterprise Section of the local authority.



One of the main functions of the fora is to provide a consultation space with the sector in each area as well as providing a platform from which representatives can be elected to sit on various structures in the county. Each fora receives core funding to enable it to function and undertake activities to support the sector.<sup>8</sup>

#### *(iv) Local Development Sector*

Outside of local government structures, there are a range of other State-funded development organisations through which the CV sector can be engaged. They include:

- Integrated Local Development Companies and Urban Based Partnerships<sup>9</sup>
- RAPID Area Implementation Teams
- County Childcare Committees
- Local Drugs Task Force
- Local Sports Partnerships

These are only a sample of the range of organisations that were established on foot of Government policy to address local issues and are important mechanisms providing an opportunity for the CV sector to get involved in influencing local economic and social development.

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8 The Irish National and Community and Voluntary Forum has been set up recently as the representative voice of the Council and City Community Fora nationwide. See [www.incvf.ie](http://www.incvf.ie)

9 This is a working title given to the new county-wide structures currently being established as part of Government policy. It is envisaged, through what is called 'the cohesion process', that area-based partnership companies, community partnership companies and LEADER companies will form one county-wide organisation (except in city areas) through which various development programmes will be administered. An official decision on the name of these new structures has not yet been taken



## Further Information:

The Citizens Information Board publishes a Directory of National Voluntary Organisations, which is a comprehensive listing of up to 600 national organisations in the CV sector with full details of their roles, objectives, contact details and resources available. The Directory, which includes details of State and public agencies of interest to the sector, is also available online at [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie)

### Other information sources

CV pillar: current Secretariat is The Wheel: [www.wheel.ie](http://www.wheel.ie)

Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)

Citizens Information Board: [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie)

Combat Poverty: [www.combatpoverty.ie](http://www.combatpoverty.ie)

Pobal: [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie)

The City and County Development Boards: [www.cdb.ie](http://www.cdb.ie)

Centre for Non-Profit Management, Trinity College: [www.cnm.tcd.ie](http://www.cnm.tcd.ie)

Centre for Voluntary Action Studies, University of Ulster, Coleraine: [www.ulster.ac.uk/cvas](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/cvas)

For more information on local government structures see: *Finding Your Way Around Local Government* published by the Combat Poverty Agency.




## **Section 2: Government Policy and the CV Sector**

Working in partnership with the CV sector is now deeply engrained in the policies and language of local and national Government. This is most evident in the multi-annual social partnership agreements which are negotiated between the Government, the employers, the unions, the farmers and the CV pillar. But it is also evidenced on a daily basis in the language of Government, in national strategies, at individual department level through planning documents and at local level through the various partnership-type arrangements.

Many of the key national policy documents contain specific policy requirements to involve the CV sector in policy planning and implementation as outlined below. This Guide pays particular attention to anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, issues that have gradually come centre stage as the country continues to experience strong economic growth.

### **Towards 2016**

The ten-year social partnership agreement signed off in 2006 outlines economic and social priorities for the decade ahead. The agreement is negotiated between the Government and four 'pillars' of which the CV sector is one (more information on the social partnership arrangement is on page 26).



*Towards 2016* is framed within the lifecycle approach proposed by the National Economic and Social Council (see text box).<sup>10</sup> It reiterates the Government's commitment to the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the CV sector as set out in the *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (see page 54).

"The Government commits to implementing the NESC proposal of maximising the contribution of the CV sector by deepening the partnership between statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations."<sup>11</sup>

## The Lifecycle Approach

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC), a Government think tank, has been particularly influential in arguing for a new way of approaching entrenched social issues. It proposes changing the way social protection supports are viewed – not to be seen as a measure of last resort but one that offers supports and incentives as a person moves through different stages of their lifecycle.

Lifecycle is defined as (a) children; (b) people of a working age; (c) older people.

*(continued overleaf)*

<sup>10</sup> NESC (2005), *Developmental Welfare State*

<sup>11</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2006), *Towards 2016*, Pg. 70






There are three elements on which this new model is framed:

- A new way of approaching service delivery: a commitment to client-centred services for everyone which tailors the service around the needs of each individual.
- A new way of approaching income payments: income or welfare supports would move from the currently static approach to one where there is tailored progression for individuals as they are supported and incentivised throughout their lifecycle.
- Greater use of activist measures: where the CV sector is encouraged to respond to unmet needs in an innovative way. Central to this is a greater degree of autonomy for local groups and organisations supported by Government.

The Government role shifts from that of direct provider to one of regulator and guarantor of diversified, high-quality and tailored arrangements for each type of service.

Much of what is proposed in the NESD document has been embraced by Government, particularly the 'lifecycle' approach. It provides an overarching strategic framework for economic and social policy and underpins the *National Development Plan (NDP), Towards 2016* and *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion)*.





While recognising that CV activity forms the ‘very core’ of a vibrant and inclusive society, the Government says that it does not seek to control the sector, but enable it, balancing light regulation with accountability.

The ultimate right to make decisions rests with the Government, the policy document notes, but in recognition of the special relationship that exists within social partnership, it commits to consulting with social partners on policy proposals and implementation arrangements through:

- Effective consultation in a spirit of good governance on the basis that Government departments and their organisations will provide a meaningful opportunity for social partners to input into the shaping of appropriate relevant policy issues and the design of implementation arrangements, where appropriate
- Government departments will manage the consultation process effectively, by giving sufficient notice, information and appropriate process for engagement, consistent with the overall requirements of effective governance
- As part of these good governance arrangements, the social partners also commit to engaging constructively with Government departments and recognising the need for the Government to deal with urgent matters in a timely manner.



## National Development Plan 2007-2013

The *National Development Plan 2007-2013: Transforming Ireland* sets out an overarching framework for Government investment priorities.<sup>12</sup> The Social Inclusion Priority forms one of the five priorities of the National Development Plan (NDP) and is based on the lifecycle approach as set out in *Towards 2016*. It is also linked in with the commitments set out in the NAPinclusion.

One of the 12 objectives of this priority refers to assisting communities, particularly disadvantaged communities, to identify and address challenges and problems in their area.

The NDP: “recognises the valuable role of the CV sector and remains committed to the principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the sector as set out in the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity”.<sup>13</sup>

This is mentioned in particular regard to the new Local and Community Development Programme, which outlines a range of interventions that will allow for the ‘comprehensive engagement’ with the CV sector.


## National Action Plan for Social Inclusion

The *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* (NAPinclusion) sets out actions and targets for addressing social inclusion over the period 2007-2016. It is framed in the lifecycle approach, with additional categories of ‘communities’ and ‘people with disabilities’, and

<sup>12</sup> Government of Ireland (2006), *National Development Plan (2007-2013): Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pg. 260:





underpinned by investment commitments made in the NDP and social and economic priorities set in *Towards 2016*.

The NAPinclusion, like other Government policy documents described earlier, focuses on the importance of delivery and says that delivering on social inclusion commitments requires not only resource investment but a renewed energy around how the Government does business.

“This requires continuing to develop an openness to change, involving government departments, agencies and other organisations working together more effectively and continuing to progressively overcome traditional barriers to co-operation.”<sup>14</sup>

There is an equal emphasis on quality services and the document states they must now move to be more accessible, flexible and customer centred. The institutional framework supporting the NAPinclusion process is quite extensive and is bedded primarily in the social partnership structures. The CV sector connects in at different points:

- The Social Inclusion Forum: an annual event organised every year by the National Economic and Social Forum to provide groups and individuals not directly involved with the social partnership process with an opportunity to air their views and experiences of poverty, exclusion and issues arising at local level
- The Towards 2016 Steering Group on which the CV Pillar hold seats
- The City and County Development Boards in each local authority and their associated committees and structures.

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Ireland (2007), *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, Pg. 16




## Task Force on Active Citizenship

The Government established the Task Force on Active Citizenship in 2006 to investigate whether community participation was declining and what action might need to be taken to further support people in getting involved in the lives of their communities.

The Task Force report, published in March 2007, was based on a wide-ranging consultation that uncovered a range of findings relevant to policy makers, including:

- Many participants had been involved in consultation exercises previously about volunteering and active citizenship and are frustrated by a perceived lack of implementation and follow-through on previous reports and initiatives
- Many felt cut off from decision-making – their voluntary activity was not valued and they felt getting involved didn't seem to make a difference
- Lower rates of engagement were most predominant among people aged over 65, people on low incomes, those not in the labour force or at study and those who left school early
- A cynicism and a lack of confidence in democratic and some other consultative structures, particularly at local level, with individuals and organisations not feeling that they are genuinely listened to
- A perceived democratic deficit at local level due to an absence of meaningful opportunities for civic participation in decision-making about local issues.





The Task Force report was accepted by Government and commitments were made to implement many of its recommendations. The ones most relevant to this Guide are:

- A need to promote awareness and understanding among public service organisations about how to engage more effectively with citizens and CV organisations. This should be a core element of public service reforms and should include a renewed emphasis on effective consultation with associated training for public servants
- The Community Fora (see page 41) in each local authority should be strengthened and public agencies at local level should be required to consult with them in relation to the development and implementation of their policies.

## White Paper on Better Regulation

The White Paper on Better Regulation was published in 2004 in an effort to improve competitiveness and public service delivery on which regulation has a significant impact. Red tape, excessive rules and regulations, policies hindering competition – these are all examples of inappropriate regulation.

The Government commits to making better use of evidence-based policy making primarily through a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA). This is a process by which an assessment is made of the likely effects of a proposed new regulation or regulatory change.



One of the four elements of an RIA is that of structured consultation with stakeholders. The Government commits to consulting more widely before regulating or making changes in regulation in order to ensure transparency but argues for a need for greater consistency in the approach to consultation.

“The State does not have a monopoly on wisdom or expertise in all areas of economic and social life. Problems can best be solved with the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders. The Government is committed to a social partnership approach across the policy spectrum. A similar broadly based inclusive approach will underpin regulatory policies and processes.”<sup>15</sup>

As a result of the commitment to improve consultation, the Government subsequently published *Reaching out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies* and the content in Section 3 draws heavily from this report.

It is envisaged that the RIA process will be rolled out to all departments, especially for proposals with major implications, or for policy areas that have been identified by the Government to be of particular importance.

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15 Government of Ireland (2004), *White Paper on Better Regulation*, Pg. 26





## NESC Strategy 2006 – People, Productivity and Purpose

As a precursor to the new social partnership agreement, the NESC undertook a review of Ireland’s economic and social situation and the challenges facing the country in the years ahead. The approach to deepening partnership between the State and the CV sector outlined in the strategy was specifically endorsed in Towards 2016.

It argues that a healthy, vibrant and diverse sector is important for overall economic and social development. To maximise the contribution of the CV sector, attention now needs to be paid to the quality of relationships between the sector and statutory agencies.

It notes that there is widespread acknowledgement that the country now experiences problems of ‘poor policy design and deadlock, implementation and delivery’. Irish public governance confronts an implementation problem. It argues for a move towards a problem-solving approach where the Government uses its authority to shape the engagement of interest groups, including the State and the CV sector.

“One of the difficulties evident in Irish policy... is a cycle of consultation and government re-assertion. Government departments and agencies find themselves embroiled in extensive consultation, often called partnership, and eventually react against it by reasserting the authority of government to govern. This is understandable since in some cases the time-consuming consultation consists of little more than sequential lobbying by one special interest after another,

*(continued overleaf)*





each of whom adopts a purely partial and totally adversarial approach to the issue the department is struggling to address...


“But the re-assertion of government authority is often short lived, as the chosen line of legislation or action proves difficult to implement, is seen as missing a significant part of the problem or has unintended effects. This often heralds re-involvement of the stakeholders and the cycle begins again... A more conscious, widespread and systematic adoption of a problem-solving approach seems likely to yield better outcomes. In many policy areas, it would replace serial consultation with collective problem solving... A problem-solving approach would allow government to focus more on articulating the outcomes it wishes to see achieved, holding executive agencies and stakeholders responsible for delivery.”<sup>16</sup>

## White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the CV Sector

The White Paper was published in 2000 and remains the most comprehensive Government statement on the relationship with the CV sector. The principles underpinning the relationship are set out in the White Paper and were re-committed to in the national agreement *Towards 2016*. Their application today is even more relevant than ever given the deepening of partnership working between the sector and the State.

<sup>16</sup> National Economic and Social Council (2005), *People, Productivity and Purpose*, Pg. 294





The White Paper clearly recognises the contribution of the sector to a democratic, inclusive and pluralist society:

“In the Government’s vision of society, the ability of the Community and Voluntary sector to provide channels for the active involvement and participation of citizens is fundamental... The Government regards statutory support for the CV sector as having an importance to the well-being of our society that goes beyond utilitarian concerns to do with ‘purchase’ of services by this or that statutory agency. It has to do with the nature of the society we wish to foster – one which fosters active participation in its affairs by individuals because such participation is vital to our democratic way of life.”<sup>17</sup>


It recognises the sector as being a core component of a vibrant civil society and the State commits to recognising the autonomy and diversity of the sector and the sector’s right to be consulted about policy in relation to the design and delivery of services and programmes.

The White Paper notes, however, that it is ultimately the responsibility of Government to make decisions. The context in which these decisions take place, however, is increasingly one of partnership – hence the ever-increasing importance of involving stakeholders in the design and implementation of policy.

The principles underpinning the relationship between the State and the CV sector referred to above are detailed in the Appendices. Some of the over-arching joint principles that apply to both the State and the sector are that:

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<sup>17</sup> Government of Ireland (2000), *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationships between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*, Pg. 53

- 
- both sectors value openness, accountability and transparency in the relationship
  - services and programmes will be informed by respect for the individual's dignity and the rights of users to quality services
  - the State and the sector will ensure the involvement of service users in the planning, delivery, management and evaluation of policy and programmes
  - there is a commitment to focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged, paying particular attention to those experiencing discrimination
  - there is a commitment to achieving equality of opportunity, access and treatment
  - there is a commitment to fostering co-operation and co-ordination across and between both sectors and particularly to share information
  - both sectors commit to carrying out regular monitoring and evaluation of individual actions and recognise the right to constructively critique each others' actions and policies
  - there is a commitment to develop mutual understanding of the culture and operating principles of each party.





## Community Participation in Action

The importance of involving the CV sector is evident in many individual departmental strategies and plans.

In the health strategy 'Primary Care – a New Direction' there was an explicit action (Action 19) stating that community participation in primary care will be strengthened by encouraging and facilitating the involvement of local CV groups in the planning and delivery of primary care services.

Lifford/Castlefinn in Co. Donegal was one of the ten areas chosen to pilot the establishment of primary care teams. The HSE West area put community participation firmly on the agenda by setting up a working group from the Primary Care Team focused exclusively on community participation. An extensive consultation process was then initiated in conjunction with the local Community Resource Centre, involving 17 focus groups, particularly concentrating on the most disadvantaged and 'hard to reach' areas and groups. This process led to the establishment of a Community Health Forum from which two representatives were elected to sit on the Primary Care Team.

The outcome of the process has ensured that a collective agenda is being represented at the Primary Care Team. It has also had a very positive effect on the work of community groups as well as health professionals:

“Within the Primary Care Team, there is an increased openness to, understanding of, and respect for the value and potential of community participation”.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> HSE (2004), *A model for Community Participation in Primary Care - Lifford/Castlefinn Primary Care Project*



## Conclusion

The policy documents set out in this section demonstrates that there is both a requirement and indeed a willingness to engage more effectively with the CV sector in policy design and delivery. The influential reports published by the NESC and the Task Force on Active Citizenship indicate a growing pressure on the public administration system to be more responsive, flexible, client centred and open to engaging with all citizens. They recognise the importance of a vibrant CV sector to support and encourage citizen participation moving towards a more effective and deeper relationship with the statutory sector.



## Further Information

Towards 2016: [www.taoiseach.ie](http://www.taoiseach.ie). Click on left header entitled 'Department of the Taoiseach', then on 'Policy Sections' and you will see 'Social Partnership' highlighted

National Development Plan: [www.ndp.ie](http://www.ndp.ie)

NAPinclusion: [www.socialinclusion.ie](http://www.socialinclusion.ie)

Active Citizenship: [www.activecitizen.ie](http://www.activecitizen.ie)

Better Regulation: [www.betterregulation.ie](http://www.betterregulation.ie)

White Paper: [www.pobail.ie](http://www.pobail.ie). Click on left header entitled 'Community and Voluntary Supports' and it will bring you to the relevant information

Community Participation Guidelines in Health: [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie). Click on left header entitled 'Current Issues', then on 'Health Strategy' which is highlighted half way down

NESC Reports: available at [www.nesdo.ie](http://www.nesdo.ie). Click on NESC link highlighted at the right hand side of the page



## Section 3: Engaging the Community and Voluntary Sector


There are some good examples of engagement between the CV sector and public officials but research continues to show that participation and involvement of the sector remains a challenge. A gap still remains between the commitment to involve people and the implementation of that commitment.<sup>19</sup>

It should be acknowledged, however, that significant movement has taken place within the statutory and the CV sector as they work towards more meaningful engagement. One of the key developments was the publication by the Government of *Reaching Out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies* in 2004 in order to assist more effective interaction between its agencies and the CV sector. Other important developments include:

- Government commitments about involving the CV sector in policy planning and development are peppered throughout national and departmental policy documents
- the relationship between the State and the sector is slowly shifting towards one of partnership as the emphasis on improving governance becomes more pronounced
- individual departments and agencies have taken strides to build structures and systems that will enable the involvement of the CV sector e.g. the NAPinclusion strategy co-ordinated by the Office

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<sup>19</sup> Combat Poverty Agency (2006), *Better Policies, Better Outcomes: Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion*, Pg. 161



for Social Inclusion provides for an annual social inclusion forum; Health Boards published 'Community Participation Guidelines' to assist the engagement of the sector in primary care teams

- the invitation by Government to CV organisations to sit on the CV pillar in the Social Partnership process.

Notwithstanding all these developments, there is an important point that is often forgotten when thinking about working with the CV sector: it is still a relatively unequal relationship with one partner holding the resources and decision-making power and the other having useful knowledge and experience but is dependant on the resources and the good will of public servants for the opportunity to be involved. It is even more unequal for people who are living in poverty or at risk of poverty because of lack of income, lack of opportunities, lack of confidence and lack of political clout.






**Benefits of involving the CV sector have been well documented to date by Government and other policy forums. Involving the CV sector:**

- Assists the decision-making process by ensuring that interested parties can express their views on a policy
- Helps to gather useful information to inform the evidence base
- Helps to inform decisions on strategic planning or investment
- Helps bring Government closer to the citizen
- Contributes to a shared understanding of issues and work towards agreed solutions
- Identifies the likely pitfalls or possible unintended consequences of a proposal
- Helps create a vibrant civil and active society in which individuals are encouraged and enabled to participate fully
- Helps respond to pressing social needs quickly, directly and effectively
- Can pioneer new approaches to service provision and local and community development

*(continued overleaf)*



- 
- Can identify needs and appropriate responses tailored to the specific needs of local communities and neighbourhoods and specific communities of interests
  - Offers new solutions where conventional approaches have failed
  - Enables people who are excluded to become involved in the development process in their own communities and at wider societal level
  - Helps ensure more appropriate and effective policies and legislation are developed that have the support of people
  - Increases the contact and strengthens the relationship between people and their public representatives.<sup>20</sup>

## Where to start?

Taking the time to think about and plan how to engage the CV sector and at what stage of the policy cycle is all important. The *Reaching Out* Guidelines deals with many of these issues particularly with regard to the process of consultation. The sections below are informed by the Guidelines but are also blended with other sources presenting a more rounded picture of the engagement process. This may offer further ideas to public officials.

<sup>20</sup> Extracted from: *Reaching out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies* (2004); *White Paper White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (2000); *Scottish Parliament Participation Handbook* (2004); *People, Productivity and Purpose* (2006)



A number of central elements should be considered before public or civil servants look to engage the CV sector:

The first of these is **information** – information is crucial and groups need to be fully informed about the policy, programme or process in question before they are even approached to get involved in any way. This information should be clear, simple, accessible and timely.

The second of these is **resources** – the department or agency needs to set resources aside to support the involvement process. Resources should be made available to cover: venue; transport costs; care costs; refreshments; and publicity. The opportunity to engage or get involved must be made as accessible and painless as possible, particularly if targeting the hard-to-reach groups.

The third element is **structures** – if groups are to be engaged on an ongoing basis throughout the policy cycle, then structures need to be put in place within departments and organisations to engage with them systematically. So rather than an informal or ad hoc approach of pulling groups together when required, (i) structures are put in place where groups can engage with the process at different stages of the policy cycle; (ii) there is transparency in the process so it is clear where inputs are fed in, where they are assembled, how and when they are dealt with; and (iii) feedback mechanisms are in place so people are clear why their inputs are not taken on board or taken on board but only in a certain way.



## Levels of Involvement


The introduction of Regulatory Impact Analysis means that public bodies will, in the future, consult more widely.<sup>21</sup> While consultation is one very important step in engaging the CV sector in policy development, the process can be deepened further and this is illustrated in Fig 4.

Starting from a position of ‘no information’, the relationship between public officials and the CV sector can move right up the spectrum ending in a position of joint or co-decision-making. Each step is dependent on the previous step providing the building blocks for involvement:

- Information and the sharing of knowledge is the ‘life blood’ of involvement, as without the full and complete availability of information on the policy initiative which is made available in good time, it is not possible for either consultation or participation to be meaningful.
- Consultation provides those individuals or groups who are interested and involved to express views on a proposal and to influence the final decision but not to be involved in the making of that decision. The power rests with the policy makers who may or may not take into consideration the views put forward through the consultation process.

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<sup>21</sup> Department of the Taoiseach (2004), *Reaching Out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies*, Pg. 10

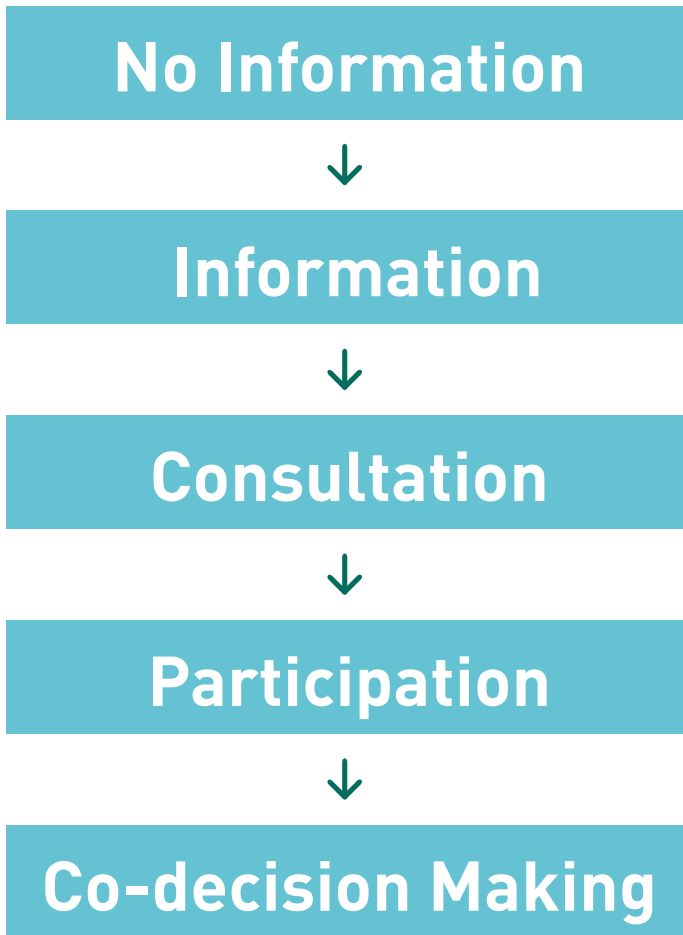
- 
- Participation is a little more active and balanced than the previous step. It recognises the contribution made by all the stakeholders in the decision-making process and it provides individuals and groups with the ability to influence the process and to have their views incorporated in the final outcome.
  - Co-decision-making and decision-making goes one step further by ensuring that a consensus is reached during the decision making process, that policies are arrived at jointly and that they reflect the concerns and priorities of all those affected by the decision, resulting in all the stakeholders having a joint ownership of the final outcome.<sup>22</sup>

The further one moves along the spectrum the more the balance of power and decision-making is shared between policy makers and others. The first two are more passive while the latter two are more active. The key decision for both the CV sector and the public policy makers is at what stage they want to be involved or want involvement respectively.

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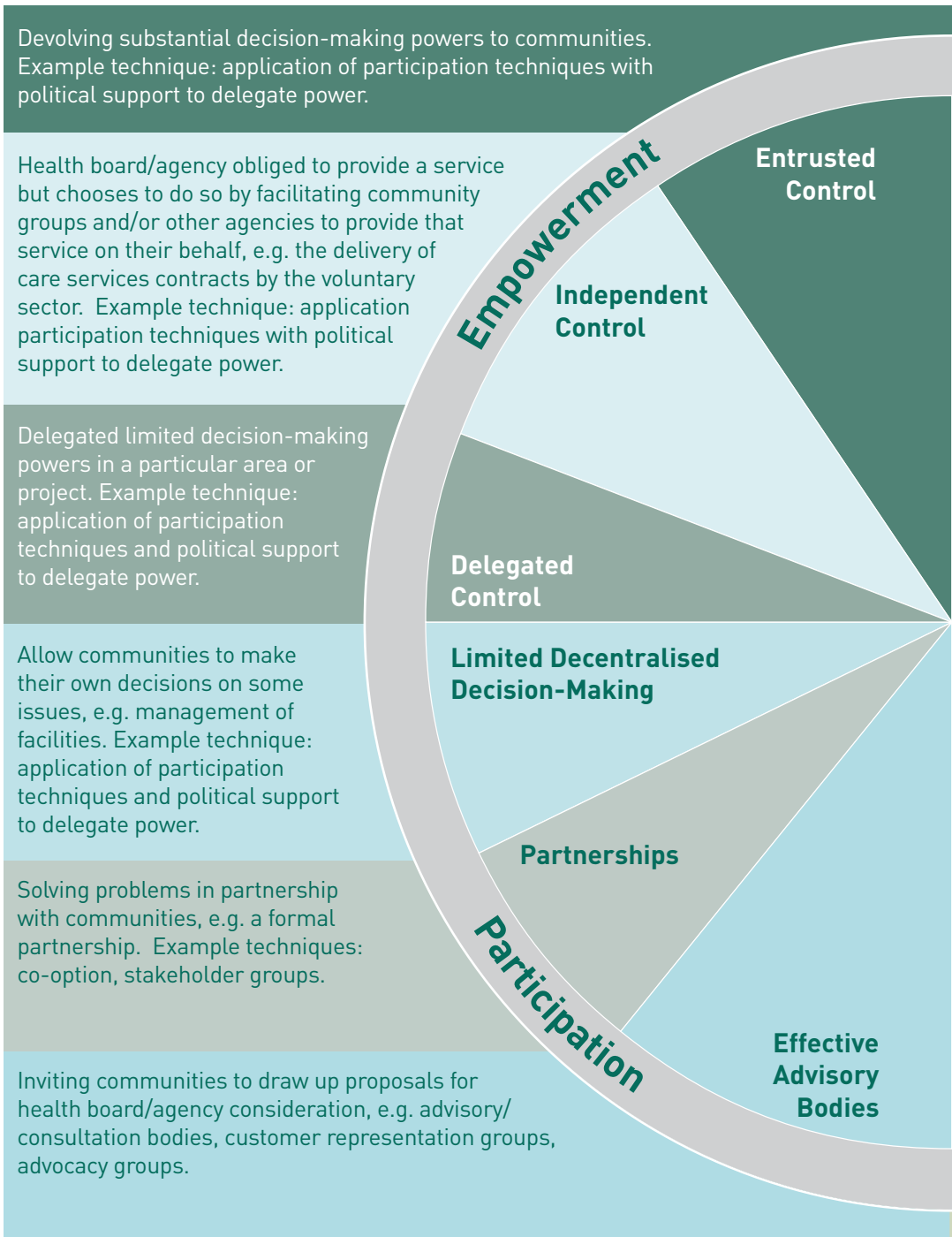
<sup>22</sup> Combat Poverty Agency (2006), *Better Policies, Better Outcomes: Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion*, Pg. 153

**Fig. 4 Levels of Involvement**

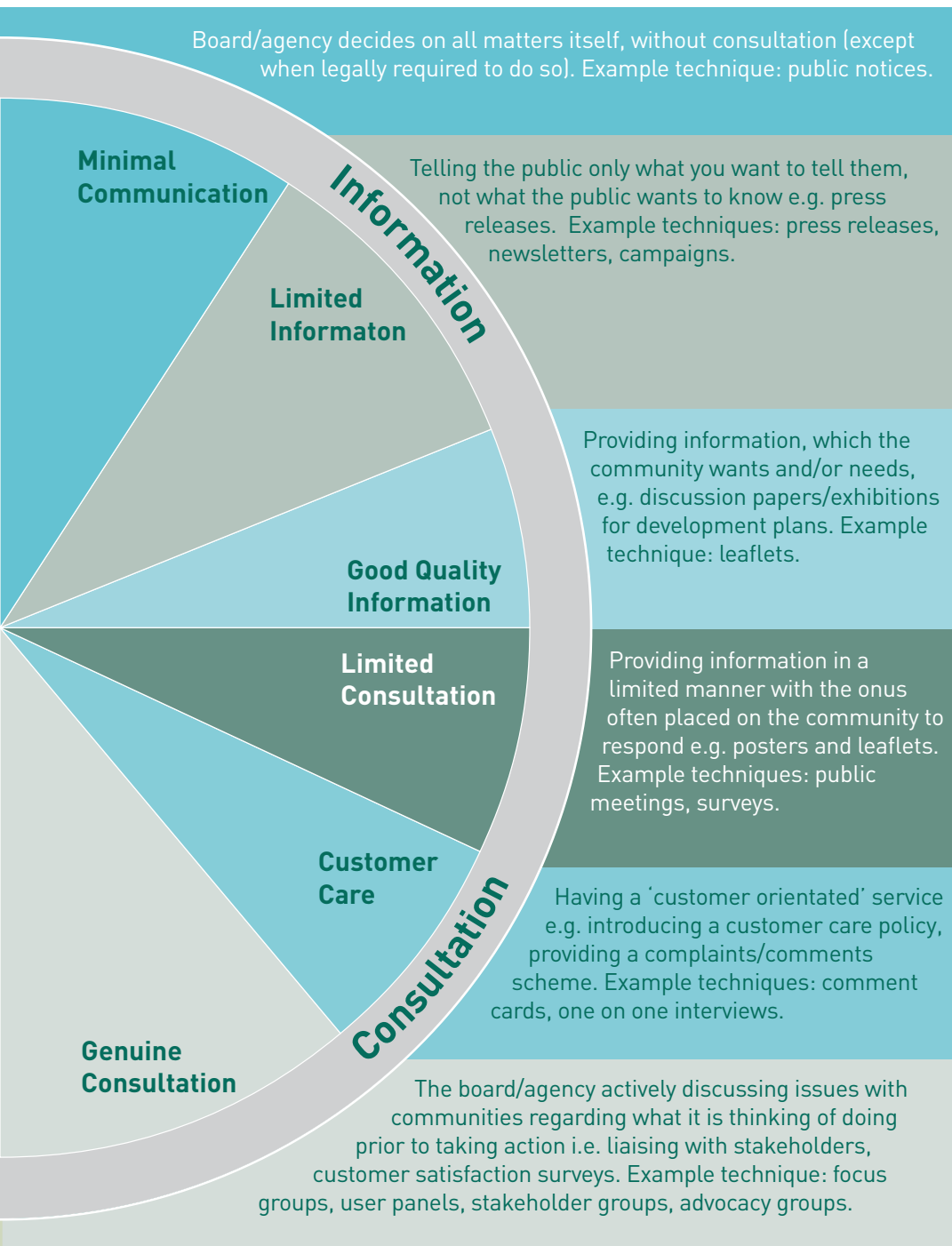


The Community Participation Guidelines published by Health Boards in 2002 reflects the model outlined above but has substituted the last stage 'co-decision-making' for 'empowerment'. The diagram overleaf clearly details the different stages of involvement and how the balance of power shifts between stages.

## Fig. 5 The Wheel of Participation

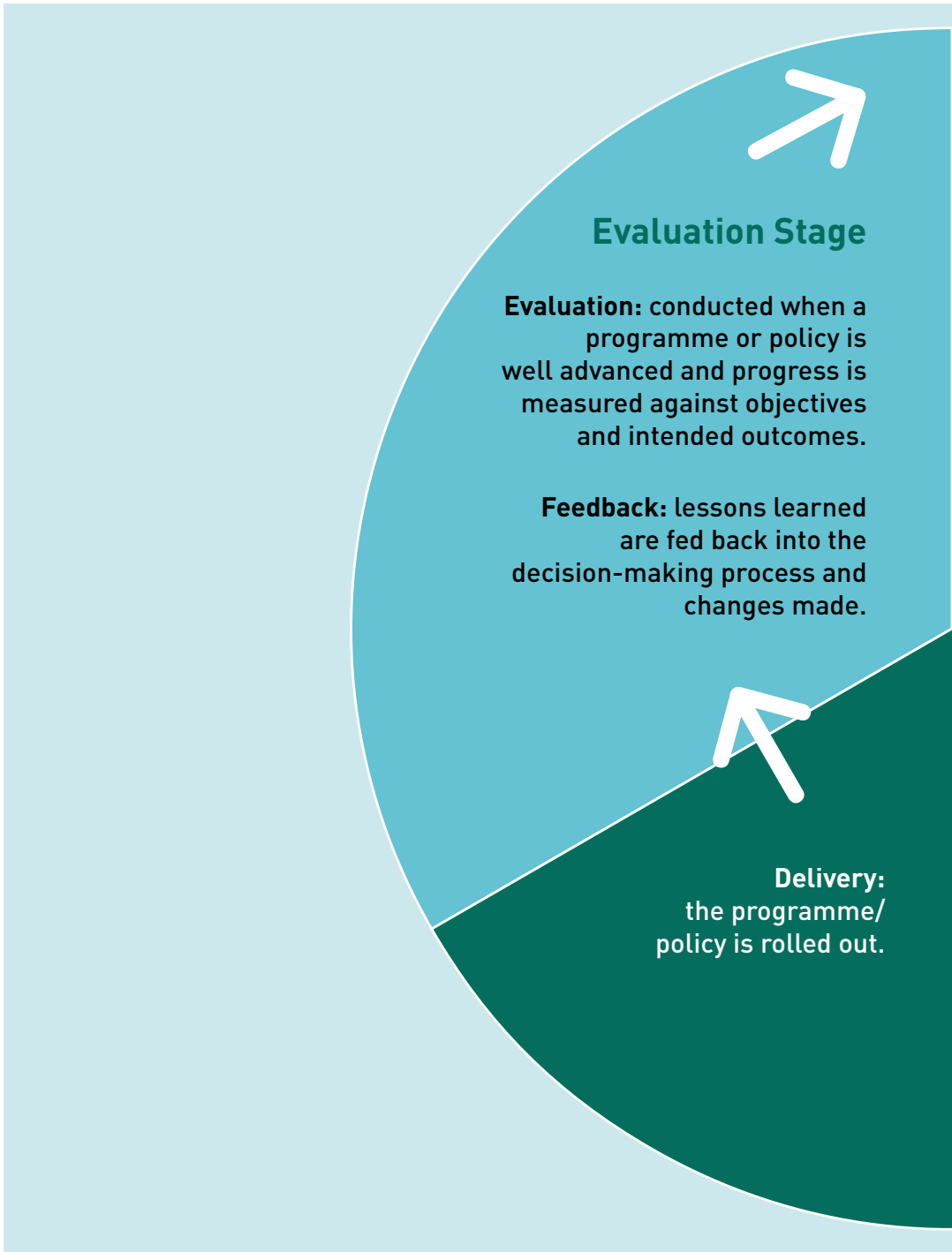


Source: Department of Health & Children (2002), *Community Participation Guidelines*





**Fig. 6 The Policy Cycle**





## Planning Stage

**Rationale:** the reason for developing/changing a new policy/programme.

**Objectives:** the objectives of the proposed new policy or programme are set along with the intended outcomes.

**Appraisal:** different options are appraised.



## Implementation Stage


**Monitoring:** the progress of the policy or programme is tracked regularly against objectives.



## The Policy Process

The theory behind policy development is that it is cyclical in nature and has a number of distinct stages as depicted in Fig 6. In practice, the policy development process is not as tidy as public officials cope with time and resource constraints as well as the unpredictable world of politics.

But the diagram demonstrates that there are points within the policy cycle where groups in the CV sector can be involved and this primarily is dependent on what is required by the policy maker and the capacity for groups to be involved.



The policy process and the levels of involvement can interact at many different levels as shown in Fig 7.

- In scenario 1, groups are given information at each stage of the policy planning process but not consulted or encouraged to participate and are not involved in co-decision-making.
- In scenario 2, they are given information and consulted at the planning stages but that is the extent of their involvement.
- In scenario 3, they are given information, consulted and invited to participate in the planning phase. They are given information about the implementation of the policy/programme and they are informed and consulted about the policy/programme at the evaluation stage.
- In scenario 4, they are given information, consulted, encouraged to participate and involved in joint (or co) decision-making at all stages of the policy process.

There are a myriad of possible permutations or combinations. This again demonstrates that the engagement process is not necessarily a static, one-off event but can be a dynamic relationship between public officials and the CV sector, embedded as an integral part of the policy process.

## Fig. 7 Policy Process and CV Involvement

### Scenario 1

	Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
No Information			
Information	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Consultation			
Participation			
Co-decision making			

### Scenario 3

	Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
No Information			
Information	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Consultation	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Participation	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Co-decision making			

## Scenario 2

	Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
No Information			
Information	<b>X</b>		
Consultation	<b>X</b>		
Participation			
Co-decision making			

## Scenario 4

	Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
No Information			
Information	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Consultation	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Participation	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Co-decision making	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>



## Step-by-Step Guide


### Be Clear

Central to the effective engagement and involvement of the sector is clarity on the part of the civil or public servant – clarity with regard to what you want to achieve, who should be involved and how should they be involved. Informing these decisions will be deliberations on what level or levels the involvement will take place and at what stage of the policy process (outlined above).

The following questions (drawn from the *Reaching Out* Guidelines and other sources) should be considered at the very outset of the engagement process before any decisions are taken:

- What is the purpose of the process?
- What do you want to find out?
- Why do you want to engage people?
- What legal obligations need to be complied with – Officials Language Act; Data Protection; Copyright?
- What is your timescale?
- Does the consultation take account of your business cycle?
- How will information be disseminated?
- Will it be a one-off consultation process or part of any ongoing engagement with the sector?



- 
- What kind of engagement methods will you use?
  - Who is your target audience and how can they be reached?
  - What kind of barriers will prevent the involvement of your audience and how can these be addressed?
  - When is information needed?
  - What resources are required, e.g. staff, budgets?
  - How will you feedback information to groups and keep them informed?
  - What are the expected outcomes?
  - How will you know if the involvement process has been effective?
  - Is outside expertise required?

### **Consider the Practicalities**

The practicalities surrounding an involvement process are often over-looked and yet are crucial to the success or otherwise of the process. Thinking about the kind of atmosphere that would be most conducive, how that will be created, how people will be encouraged to be involved – these are all aspects that determine how successful the process will be.


By answering the questions above, the framework for the involvement of the CV sector in the particular policy or programme is set. The next step is dealing with the practicalities of the process.





- Get people focused – think of the best way to encourage people to participate.
- Involve people you want to reach at the earliest planning stages, whether it is to gauge the issues which are most important or help in planning an event. Be realistic about how much effort and time people will want to give.
- Provide sufficient advance resources for groups and individuals to prepare for involvement – this should include time and financial resources.
- Make it practically easy for people and think of their needs and costs – location/accessibility/time of meeting/transport/childcare refreshments/interpreters.
- Publicise the process keeping your target audience in mind and where they are most likely to access the information.
- Go out to people in their own communities and in their own environment, e.g. community centres, local clubs.
- Use intermediaries if a group might be cynical or reluctant to participate. Face-to-face briefing meetings for local community workers or agencies that are linked into networks and groups can produce more interest than a circular letter or a listing on the website.
- Cover participation costs including childcare, eldercare and transport.



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- Have a comfortable and accessible venue – people will communicate and participate more when they feel at ease.
  - Seating arrangements – make sure it is not too formal because this can be off-putting for many people.
  - Create the right atmosphere – welcoming people, providing refreshments and allowing mingle time at the beginning of an event to allow people time to get to know each other.
  - Use plain and straightforward language – keep it short and simple. If using jargon, make sure it is explained or simplified.
  - Make connections for people – try to outline connections between a policy or legislation to people’s everyday lives.
  - Use appropriate equipment – power points or technical equipment can create distance in the audience.
  - Ensure that stakeholders are clear about what they can expect from participation and how much their views can influence the policy-making process.
  - Where possible be based on small rather than large groups – this is particularly important when involving people who experience poverty and social exclusion who might find large groups more intimidating. Think quality not quantity – of participation. A series of focused smaller group initiatives can often produce good-quality material.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Extracted from: *Reaching Out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies* (2004); *Report of the Commission on Poverty and Power* (2000); *Towards Effective Involvement* (2000); *Scottish Parliament Handbook* (2004)



## Choose your methods


Once the objective of the engagement exercise is clear and the practicalities considered, attention should then turn to how it will be done and what methods are the most appropriate. Involving the sector can be more than just a passive listening exercise by the State – it can be a more vigorous and deeper engagement process, with both sides listening and engaging on the issues.

When choosing methods of engagement, consideration should be given as to how a CV group operates. Management committee or boards are made up of volunteers who meet regularly to discuss activity and make decisions. First-off, they require the information to make a decision about whether it should engage with a particular policy process (depending on topic and capacity), then it takes time to pull views together from all members before the policy position is finalised and gets signed off.

This process, by its very nature, does not happen overnight and just as the CV sector needs to appreciate that public officials have a particular way of operating with timeframes and deadlines so too do the public officials need to appreciate the way decisions get made and work gets done in the CV sector. This is why adequate timeframes and resources are so crucial.

The *Reaching Out* guidelines state that the methods chosen should reflect the particular circumstances of each consultation with each one having its own strengths and weaknesses. The methods most often employed include: (a) call for submissions; (b) public consultation meetings; and (c) focus groups.





These are detailed below along with a list of other methods which may not be as familiar to readers but may be of interest when trying to think of new ways to engage CV groups.<sup>24</sup> Many of these methods can be used individually or several can be employed at any one time or on an ongoing basis as part of a structured involvement between the State and the CV sector.


It is important that people also think creatively about how to engage people, particularly those who experience poverty or social exclusion. Think about the places where people will go in an ordinary day, e.g. school or work. Think about who might come into contact with them on an everyday basis, e.g. community worker or health professionals.

### *Seeking Individual Views*

- Written submissions are useful but don't normally impact on the wider public or hard-to-reach groups. They can be improved by improving the wording and style of the call for evidence, going out to speak about it to local groups, contacting local groups to help people frame their responses or placing a call in the local media.
- Interviews are useful for sensitive information and can be carried out face to face or by telephone. It is a good method for reaching excluded groups.
- Comment/Suggestion schemes and complaint mechanisms can be included on forms which offer customers an immediate challenge for feedback. The primary purpose is to provide information to staff quickly so that operational problems can be corrected as soon as possible.

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<sup>24</sup> The *Reaching Out* Guidelines provide a useful comparative chart at the back of the booklet which rates the effectiveness of each consultation method

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- Surveys are an effective way of contacting a large number of people and gathering their views and comments. They can be done via post, telephone or the web. Bear in mind, however, that IT methods may exclude people who do not have access to the necessary technology.
  - Listening surveys help larger sections of the community to get involved. A number of local people receive an initial briefing and training and then go to where the community gathers (schools, shops, football pitches) and ask a small number of questions about an issue or the area. The people being interviewed are then asked to come to a meeting for further discussion.

#### *Gathering Group Views (5-15 people)*

- Focus groups typically consist of about 8-10 people led by a trained facilitator who keeps the group to a task in terms of a set of questions. The questions are normally prepared well in advance to ensure answers are relevant.
- Group interviews bring people together to discuss a topic in a fairly open-ended way.
- Round table workshops can be run with anything between 10-100 people and sometimes they can run over a few sessions. They usually involve a specialist presentation and then a round table brainstorming but the topic or question should be reasonably focused and not too broad.



- 
- Specific interest groups bring together people who have developed an interest, concern or expertise about a particular topic which often gives more in-depth analysis and information and draws attention to unusual or complex aspects of a policy issue.
  - Consumer/user panels involve a small group of users who meet representatives from departments to express their opinions on the services they have received or to express user concerns. They usually meet regularly over a specific time period.
  - Advisory committees are established to act as a source of expert advice on certain issues.

#### *Larger Meetings (15–500)*

- Public meetings are often arranged for members of the public to find out about and express their views on particular issues. Clarity about what the meeting is about and which questions it would like to address are crucial as are practical considerations mentioned above.
- Open-space workshops provide a framework enabling any group of people to create their own programme of discussions on almost any theme. They are particularly useful for looking at issues, opportunities, actions and priorities and are self-managed by participants with trained facilitators to assist in the process.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Extracted from: *Reaching Out: Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies* (2004), *The Scottish Parliament Participation Handbook* (2004)



## Making the Contact

Clarifying the objective and identifying the methods to be used is all very well but who do you involve in the process and how do you contact them?

There is no avoiding the fact that one of the greatest challenges in involving the CV sector in the policy process is that of knowing who to contact. A regular source of frustration for public officials is to conduct a consultation process only to find that complaints filter in afterwards from groups that were not involved or not invited to participate.

There is also no avoiding the fact this is the nature of the sector and there is never going to be one phone number to ring that will bring together all the people required. A number of different approaches are necessary at different levels to ensure that the call for involvement is made to the right people at the right time.


It takes time and effort and there is no 'short-cut' or magic bullet. Much of it depends on the objective of the exercise and who you need to talk to – being clear about what is required is absolutely fundamental.

It is important to reiterate once again that many groups are not linked into any of the social partnership processes at national or local level and specific strategies need to be put in place to encourage their involvement.

### *National Level*

- Contact the groups involved in the social partnership process to do one of three things or all three if so inclined: (a) assist you in organising the process; (b) notify their constituent groups of the process; and (c) give contact details so that individuals and groups






can be contacted directly. The first port of call should be the Secretariat of the pillar (currently The Wheel).

- The Citizens Information Board's website has an online Resource Database for the CV Sector, which includes a directory of national voluntary organisations and a directory of funding sources [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie).
- Some national organisations (see Directory above) have databases of CV groups around the country.
- There are a number of publications (both e-newsletters and hard copy) produced by the CV sector where the process can be advertised e.g.:
  - Community exchange electronic newsletter: [www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie)
  - Community Workers Co-operative [www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie)
  - Combat Poverty Agency – *Action on Poverty Today* [www.combatpoverty.ie](http://www.combatpoverty.ie)
  - Community Development Projects – *Changing Ireland* [www.changingireland.ie](http://www.changingireland.ie)
  - Local development sector – *Inclusion*
  - Family Resource Centres – *Inform* [www.familyresource.ie](http://www.familyresource.ie).
- Depending on the process and objective involved, calls for involvement can be made via the national media – papers, newspapers, internet sites.
- There is now an extensive network of community media around the country, including community radio, community TV and issue-specific magazines e.g. Gay Community News; 'In Focus' – magazine of the Irish Women's Council; 'The Voice of Refugees'.








Further information on community media outlets is available from Community Media Network at [www.cmn.ie](http://www.cmn.ie).

- There are a number of statutory bodies concerned with supporting the CV sector which are useful in providing contacts, information and advice:
  - (a) the Citizens Information Board supports the Citizen Information Centres around the country and also provides training and information to CV groups. It's website has a online directory of CV groups ([www.cidb.ie/comhairlevcs.nsf](http://www.cidb.ie/comhairlevcs.nsf));
  - (b) the Combat Poverty Agency has a statutory role of advising the Government on poverty issues but also plays a role in supporting anti-poverty work at local level;
  - (c) the Equality Authority, supports CV groups around equality and diversity issues [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie).

### *Local Level*

- Contact the Community and Enterprise Section in each City and County Council which will have a list of groups operating in the area.
- Contact the Community Forum in each area – they hold regular meetings and will be able to advertise or publicise the process in this way. Many of them also have local newsletters.
- The local development sector will have contact details for issue or geographic-specific groups e.g. the Integrated Local Development Companies and urban-based partnerships will have contacts for a range of target groups; County Childcare Committees will have contact details for childcare providers; local drugs task force will have contacts for drug-related services and groups in the area.



- 
- Contact with groups not linked into the social partnership process can be made via the media – local radio, local papers, parish bulletins, local community internet sites.
  - Links with local issue-specific groups can be made via their national networks e.g. National Disability Federation. Contacts for these networks are available through the database of groups operated by The Wheel or Citizens Information Board or the Secretariat of the CV pillar.
  - Contact the Citizens Information Centres in each area.
  - Local politicians are always a good source of information for local groups or contacts in their area.

There is no guarantee that even if all these lines of inquiry are pursued, that everyone will be caught in the net but the important thing is that the opportunities are created for people to become involved and participate. Over time, people will take advantage of these opportunities if they believe that the process is meaningful and their views are being taken seriously.



## Challenges to Involvement

Engaging people who are marginalised or who live in poverty is difficult for everyone – statutory and CV sector alike. They often see little point in being involved in any policy process or initiative believing it will make little difference. This general sense of powerlessness and disillusionment means they often disengage from the system, being a passive recipient of services rather than taking an active role in the change process.<sup>26</sup>

But it is only by hearing those voices that policies and processes can be altered and changed to address their needs in a real way and make some inroads into addressing the economic and social exclusion experienced. The fact that it is often difficult to engage them in the process does not mean that no effort should be made.

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<sup>26</sup> UK Coalition Against Poverty (2000), *Listen hear – The Right to be Heard*, Policy Press & the UK Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power



## Potential Barriers to Involvement and Participation

### *Institutional/Political*

- The danger of stereotyping people experiencing exclusion and treating individuals as part of a generic group
- Tokenism on the part of those leading the process
- Under-representation of excluded people
- Communicating in language that is not comprehensible to those without higher education or use of jargon

### *Cultural*

- The apparent apathy and indifference of those experiencing poverty which works against becoming involved in a participative process
- The lack of trust many people have in the political process
- Inappropriate level of expectations

### *Physical*

- A lack of child/social care facilities
- Problems with the location of meetings and the accessibility to public transport
- A lack of provision of access for people with disabilities

*(continued overleaf)*



### *Technical*


- Lack of information, knowledge and analytical skills to make a meaningful contribution
- Practical considerations such as time of meetings, size of the process, venue
- Lack of social infrastructure for the development of participative structures
- Lack of skills and experience in methods to involve excluded people
- Lack of education, skills and experience necessary to become involved

### *Economic*

- The lack of basic financial resources to participate
- Inadequate financial resources to facilitate the involvement of excluded people<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Combat Poverty Agency (2006), *Better Policies, Better Outcomes: Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion*, Pg. 157






The UK Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power conducted a two-year research project on participation and concluded that people living in poverty face many barriers when it comes to taking part in decision-making – not enough money, not enough information and not enough confidence. But the main problem was that too often people experiencing poverty don't feel respected and the ultimate disrespect is 'being involved in phoney participation by people who don't listen, when things don't change'.<sup>28</sup>

Getting people involved is part of a long-term process and not just a once off. This takes time, resources, effort and organisation. So how can people who experience exclusion be engaged?

- Think clearly about who should be involved and this should help identify possible barriers that can be addressed before the process begins e.g. transport, literacy problems, childcare.
- Take time to identify and include less visible or hard-to-reach groups that may not already have relationships with public bodies.
- Consider the possibility of pre-consultation and other forms of practical support and encouragement for CV groups that might not normally participate in consultation processes.
- Avoid using the size of a group to decide whether or not to involve it.
- Establish clear and transparent structures for involvement – make sure expectations on behalf of everyone are realistic.
- Think about creative methods to engage individuals.

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28 UK Coalition Against Poverty (2000), *Listen hear – The Right to be Heard*, Pg. 18

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- Link in with community workers at local level who may help in identifying and assisting with the involvement of these individuals.
  - Take the time to build good relationships as networks are important.
  - Making participation as enjoyable and easy as possible for people and 'going to them' rather than expecting citizens to come to you.
  - Use new technologies e.g. email, texting, e-consulting (bear in mind that new technologies may also exclude a certain section of the population and this needs to be considered before using).
  - Assign one person to act as a co-ordinator or liaison officer to act as the contact person.
  - Consider how feedback to those who have taken part in consultation will be handled.






## Conclusion

Building up a relationship between the CV sector and public officials is a long-term process requiring political will, commitment and energy. The benefits of involving the sector are widely acknowledged but the engagement process is challenging, given the organic nature of the sector. It is particularly challenging to engage people and groups who are most marginalised but it is only by hearing these voices that policies and processes can be altered to be more effective. There are a number of key things to remember.

- The CV sector is dependant on public officials to provide the opportunities, time, resources and structures that will facilitate its involvement in the policy development process.
- Involving the CV sector is not necessarily a static, one-off event but can be a dynamic and vigorous relationship built up over time between public officials and the CV sector.
- Three central elements require attention when involving the CV sector in the policy process: (a) information; (b) resources; and (c) structures.
- Decisions have to be made by both public officials and the CV sector about what kind of involvement they want in the policy development process – much of this is dependent on resources, timing and capacity.
- Public officials need to be clear about what why they want the CV sector involved and what they want from it.




- 
- Consider the practicalities associated with involving the CV sector in the policy process.
  - Choose the methods of engagement carefully and make sure they are appropriate to the target audience.
  - There is no one magic phone number to ring which will bring all relevant CV groups together – different approaches are required at different levels to ensure that the right people are involved at the right time.



## Appendix

### Joint principles applying to both the statutory sector and the CV sector

- 1 Both sectors value openness, accountability and transparency in the relationship between the State and the CV sector.
- 2 Services and programmes will be informed by the principles of respect for the individual's dignity, privacy and confidentiality. They will also be informed by the rights of users to quality services that are accessible to them, e.g. people with disabilities. Services and programmes should have regard for commitments under the Constitution, EU and International Treaties and Conventions.
- 3 There is a shared commitment by both the State and the sector to ensure the involvement of consumers and people who avail of services in the planning, delivery, management and evaluation of policy and programmes. This applies at all levels: national, regional and local.
- 4 There is a commitment by the State and the sector to focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged.
- 5 The sector and the State are committed to paying particular attention to the needs of groups experiencing discrimination, especially those named in Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty.
- 6 There is a commitment to achieving equality of opportunity, access and treatment by both the State and the sector and to the development of mechanisms to do this. This includes the commitment to affirmative action for particular target groups.

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- 7 There is a joint commitment relating to fostering co-operation and the co-ordination within and across each Sector as well as between the State and the CV sector.
  - 8 There is a commitment on the part of both the State and the sector to provide access to, and to share, information relevant to the pursuit of shared objectives.
  - 9 The State and the sector commit themselves to carrying out regular monitoring and evaluation of their individual actions and of the co-operation between them.
  - 10 The State and the sector each recognise their mutual right to constructively critique each other's actions and policies.
  - 11 There is a commitment on the part of both the State and the sector to create and support the appropriate mechanisms, institution and conduits to enable the State to relate to the sector and its component parts.
  - 12 There is a commitment to developing mutual understanding of the culture and operating principles of each Sector and to take practical steps to achieve this. Both sectors commit themselves to using working methods that are flexible and efficient in the context of the growing demands and range of tasks posed by modern society.





## Principles informing the State

- 1 The State recognises and validates the sector as a core component of a vibrant civil society and the effort to build a broader, more participative and more accountable democracy in Ireland.
- 2 The State commits itself to respect the autonomy and diversity of the CV sector and acknowledges its role as a legitimate social partner. This relates to a variety of partnership arenas. In particular, the State recognises that CV groups, which are providing services or undertaking community or local development work with statutory funding, have a right to be consulted about policy in relation to the design and delivery of services/ programmes.
- 3 The State recognises and welcomes the diversity of the sector.
- 4 The State acknowledges the right of the sector to organise and represent itself.
- 5 The State acknowledges the role of the sector in inputting to policy making and the pursuit of common objectives. This includes proposed legislation, development of relevant policies (i.e. policy areas of immediate interest and having an impact on the work of both), monitoring of existing policies and consultations with end users of public services. The State will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to give effect to this.



## Principles informing the CV sector

- 1 The sector recognises and values its diversity as well as recognising and valuing its commonly held features. Appropriate structures to reflect this should be developed.
- 2 The sector will continually develop itself as a sector, enhancing communication and building co-operation between its component parts.
- 3 The sector will maintain its ethos as a sector distinct from the State, albeit acknowledging a role in supplying services on contract from the State.
- 4 The sector is accountable for any resources received from the Exchequer, EU or private sources.
- 5 The sector will engage in work and actions designed to impact at policy level.
- 6 The sector recognises that public authorities as statutory bodies have legal responsibilities in delivering services.



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*Finding Your Way* is a series of guides which are being published as part of the *Having Your Say* Programme.

A central tenet of the programme is the view that policies intended to tackle poverty are more likely to be successful if the people and communities they are designed for are involved in their planning and implementation.

The guides are designed as practical tools to support the community and voluntary sector to understand, analyse and influence the policy environment in a number of key areas.

This guide to understanding the community and voluntary sector is published in partnership with the Citizens Information Board and The Wheel.

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