

ILM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AWARDS IN SELF-EVALUATION DELIVERED IN NORTH DOWN



Shared Spaces and Services project participants are presented with their ILM Development Awards in Self-evaluation by CENI Training Manager, Gladys Swanton (2nd from left).

North Down Council's Community Services Unit commissioned CENI to deliver a self-evaluation support programme for the Shared Spaces and Services Project. This one-year project involved a consortium of community and voluntary groups, schools, statutory organisations, private sector partners and churches. It delivered a number of events aimed at strengthening participation in local planning and decision-making as well as building community relationships.

Within the Shared Spaces and Services Project plan there was some resource set aside to develop the capacity of local groups to utilise self-evaluation processes to improve reflective practice and learning. A support programme was designed by CENI for the group which was delivered over several months and involved a combination of short group-training sessions and follow-up mentoring support. The group undertook to complete two small scale self-evaluation projects - with one focusing on a 'Safety of Seniors' programme (Age North Down and Ards) and the second reporting from a number of 'community based study trips' conducted by the Shared Spaces Group.

CENI facilitated the process throughout including supporting the development of terms of reference for the projects; the development of self-evaluation plans and data collection tools; as well as analysis and reporting of findings.

The support culminated in a presentation event when each group shared the learning from their self-evaluation project with their peers. This was followed by a presentation of ILM Development Awards in recognition of the hard work undertaken by the participants. These awards were funded under CENI's BCT project.

Commenting on the programme, participants stated that it was 'a very valuable exercise showing very practical ways of doing self-evaluation' and that they had developed 'transferable skills'. Others stated that it had helped them to 'look at different aspects of their work in a more methodical way'. Some also commented on the benefits gained from 'learning from others in the group' and the value of gaining insights into 'what other groups are doing in the area'.

'Measuring Change': Update on CENI's work with the Big Lottery Fund's 'Safe and Well' and 'Live and Learn' Programmes

BIG commissioned CENI in 2010 to develop an approach that would support grant holders to baseline and measure outcomes across the Live and Learn and Safe and Well programmes. Some 36 partnership projects are funded for up to five years under these two programmes.

CENI's 'Measuring Change' approach provides a structured and systematic method for baselining and measuring the qualitative changes resulting from project interventions. CENI has applied this with the BIG programmes:

- Developing a framework of programme-level outcomes across four dimensions - people, place, organisation and relationships;
- Developing a standard, but simple, methodology to baseline and measure change by individual projects against these programme level outcomes;
- Supporting and facilitating funded projects to ensure the methodology is implemented in a consistent and rigorous manner.

A successful pilot with six projects has highlighted the benefits for the participating projects; for example:

- Helping to locate their individual projects against higher level programme outcomes;
- Clarifying and focusing their own project's vision;
- Identifying outcomes which had always been implicit in their work but which had not previously been acknowledged or articulated.

The pilot also illustrated the potential benefits at a programme level. By using a standard approach to generate quantitative and qualitative data from individual projects this enables data to be aggregated to demonstrate overall programme impact.

Following on from the pilot the approach is now being rolled out with up to 30 partnership projects funded under these programmes across Northern Ireland.

A detailed report on the research will be presented to the Big Lottery Fund in early 2012.



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Pictured at the Fit for Purpose seminar are (from L-R): Denise Hayward (Volunteer Now); Paddy Sloan (BBC Children in Need/CENI Board); Shirley Hawkes (Early Years); Sam Matthews (Charities Evaluation Services); Joanne McDowell (Big Lottery Fund); Frances McCandless (Charity Commission N.I.)

Regulation, Good Governance and the Use of Quality Standards

CENI recently hosted a 'Fit for Purpose' seminar which explored a range of issues around Regulation, Good Governance and the Use of Quality Standards. The event was delivered as part of CENI's project funded by the BIG Lottery Fund's Building Change Trust programme. It was planned in conjunction with the Developing Governance Group, a collective of 13 voluntary/community support organisations with extensive experience across the sector.

Speaking about the event, Gladys Swanton, CENI Training Manager, said:

"The voluntary and community sector is subject to a number of requirements including the new Charities legislation as well as an on-going audit focus from funders and the need to demonstrate good governance practices are in place. In addition, there is increased regulation and

the need for evidence of quality standards associated with the sector's growing service delivery role. These developments present challenges for organisations to be fully 'fit for purpose'. Our aim in hosting this event is to provide an opportunity for voluntary and community groups to be informed of current requirements as well as learn about good governance and quality improvement tools within the sector."

The event brought together a variety of stakeholders around this theme including regulators, funders and support providers. Case study examples were presented as a means of sharing learning with regard to good governance and quality improvement approaches used within the sector.

Speakers included:

- The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, the Big Lottery

Fund, and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) who addressed the requirements and challenges impacting on the sector;

- Charities Evaluation Services and the Developing Governance Group who highlighted the use of governance support tools and quality approaches used within the sector;
- The CEDAR Foundation and Early Years: The Organisation for Young Children who provided practical illustrations on the use of quality improvement tools and approaches.

The programme provided a wealth of information for participants - Frances McCandless, Head of the Charity Commission (CCNI) gave a useful insight into the role and new powers of the Commission, its progress to date and some guidance on the registration of

continued overleaf



From L-R: Stephen Mathews (CEDAR Foundation); Denise McCann (NICVA); Gladys Swanton (CENI) and John Black (RQIA).

charities as well as accounting and reporting. Commenting on the implications for governance, Frances stated:

“Many of the new powers exist to support governance and now is a good time for Trustees to look at their governance and governing documents and review their practice.”

The Developing Governance Group presented on its work to support the sector to be ‘Fit for Purpose’. This included published and on-line resources as well as a governance health-check which may be used by voluntary committees. Reflecting on feedback from recent roadshow events, conducted jointly with the CCNI, Denise McCann said:

“There is quite a bit of apprehension, particularly amongst smaller groups, about the regulations and changes and what the implications of these will be for them in terms of capacity and time, and the level of support available. Our hope is that these DGG resources will contribute to building capacity to meet the challenges.”

Sam Matthews from Charities Evaluation Services outlined recent developments in relation to the PQASSO quality system, including the availability of accreditation and the roll out of an extensive capacity building programme within the UK. This quality system is widely used by the voluntary/ community sector in the UK and has been

endorsed by the Charity Commission in England and Wales. She explained:

“The 12 areas within the PQASSO system cover all the bases for groups helping them to meet the requirements of funders and regulators, whilst at the same time maintaining the values and ethos of the sector.”

The presentations were followed by a lively Q&A session and roundtable discussions which highlighted some key concerns around:

- ‘What practical measures would be put in place to support the sector?’
- ‘What might be the role of accreditation and how might it be used within the sector; recognising its value but also expressing concerns that this could create a two-tier sector.’
- ‘The need for proportionate approaches given the diversity of the sector and the limitations of a “one size fits all” approach.’

Feedback from the event suggests that it was very useful in providing updates on current requirements and offered interesting ideas and practical resources which could be taken forward. CENI will be continuing to explore this topic and the others raised through its seminar series, with further events planned in early 2012.

***Presentations from the event are available from www.ceni.org.**

¹ The Code of Good Governance, DIY Committee Guide, and Governance Healthcheck may be viewed and downloaded from www.goodgovernancecode.org or www.diycommitteeguide.org



Seminar speakers from L-R: Denise McCann (NICVA); Stephen Mathews (CEDAR); Sam Matthews (CES); John Black (RQIA); Joanne McDowell (BIG) and Frances McCandless (CCNI).

Assets Based Approach to Development

Funded by the Building Change Trust, CENI is about to embark on an update of the original Social Assets research carried out in 2008, but with some key differences.

model of social assets and constructing some pilot exercises with actual area based programmes (e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal).

The outworking of these pilots will provide a practice base to inform future planning, delivery and evaluation of community based funding programmes i.e.

- Provide funders with evidence to baseline the assets of communities and plan interventions in conjunction with community organisations; and
- Provide funders and community organisations with a means to measure their impact in terms of contributing to these assets.

The 2008 CENI/CFNI Social Assets research sought to provide a method for capturing the development assets of geographic communities and a framework for measuring developmental change. The research was based on the notion that communities tended to be profiled exclusively on their needs (measured by multiple deprivation) which, while essential, did not take into account their developmental potential.

The Social Assets approach proposed that a key purpose of area development programmes should also be about the identification and development of those assets which maximise the development potential within such areas. To do so would require:

- Profiling to estimate the existing level of those assets within communities which contribute to development potential i.e. a baseline of social assets; and
- Measuring change in those assets over time produced by programme interventions.

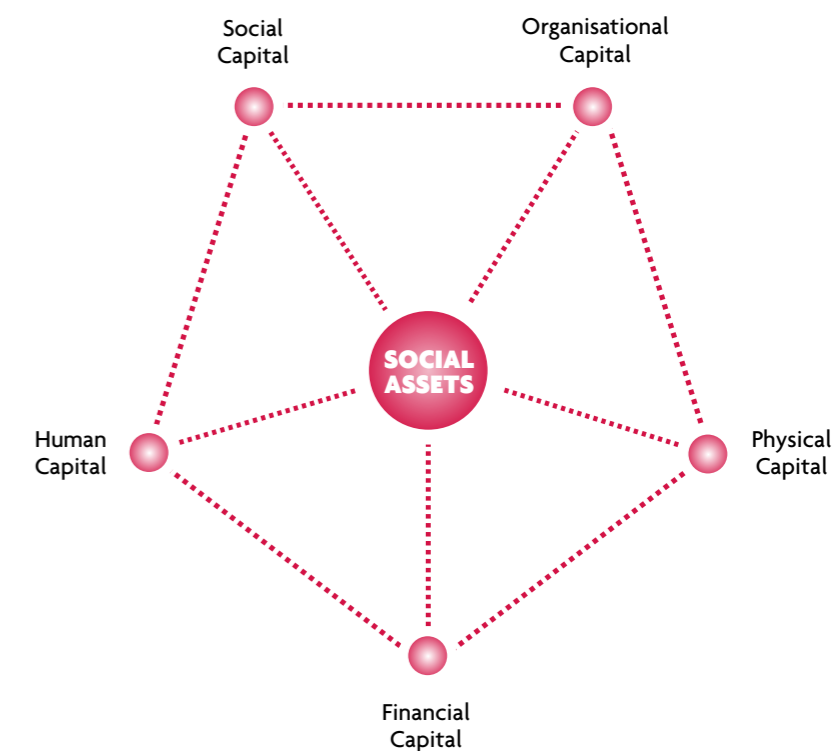
In relation to profiling, the CENI/CFNI 2008 research generated social assets data on two domains, Social Capital and Organisation Capital at Super Output Area (SOA) level across NI. CENI now proposes to update this research but with the following changes from the original approach:

- To broaden the social assets model to incorporate additional domains of physical, human and financial capital (see model below) and,
- To profile distinct areas covered by actual programmes rather than attempt a full Northern Ireland coverage using SOA as a unit of measurement.

The next stage of the research will therefore involve developing the new

CENI proposed Social Asset Domains

1. Social capital: relationships conducive to the development process
2. Organisational capital: participative, effective local organisations
3. Human capital: level and effective involvement of volunteers/paid workers
4. Physical capital: the quality of services, facilities and community safety
5. Financial capital: access to financial services



Methodology

Profiling Social Assets and measuring change involves the use of Nominal Group Technique (NGT) to generate relevant quantitative and qualitative data. Panels of experts with knowledge and experience of areas to be covered are facilitated by a CENI external evaluator to ‘rate’ an area against each of the domains.

In addition, secondary sources of data available on local areas are also accessed. The combination of secondary and NGT generated data provides a point in time baseline estimate of the social assets for a defined area or set of areas.