

CENI Board

CENI Board of Directors 2006/2007

Maurice Meehan (Chairperson)
Investing for Health, EHSSB

Kieran Harding (Treasurer)
Business in the Community

Stephen Bloomer
Interaction Belfast

Caroline Bloomfield
(appointed September 06)
North & West Belfast Health Action Zone

Margaret Ferguson
(appointed October 06)
Community Change

Gareth Harper (appointed September 06)
Rural Community Network

Nick Mack
Associate Consultant

Gordon McCullough
NICVA

Resignations

Sheila Jane Malley
(resigned October 06)
BBC Children in Need

Claire Linney
(resigned April 06)
Rural Community Network



Annual Report 2006 - 2007

CENI Staff

Brendan McDonnell	Director
Nicola McIlldoon	Deputy Director
Norman Gillespie	Senior Evaluator
Gladys Swanton	Training Manager
Joanne Templeton	Training & Development Officer
Kerry McCarroll	Information Officer
Pamela Walker	Finance & Administration Officer
Emily Jackson	Administrative Assistant (joined November 06)
Gregory Cunningham	Seconded from DRD (September 04)

Strengthening the voluntary and
community sector through a better
understanding and use of evaluation

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Mission:

Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) is a unique support organisation providing a range of specialist evaluation and training services to the voluntary and community sector, statutory sector and funders. Our mission is:

To enhance the effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector through a better understanding and use of evaluation.

Aims:

Through our work we seek to:

- Develop knowledge and skills in evaluation and quality systems to improve organisational effectiveness
- Assess performance and evidence added value
- Promote a broader awareness and understanding of evaluation across the voluntary/community sector
- Inform good practice in the conduct of evaluation appropriate to the sector

We do this through providing a range of services including:

- Training and support
- External evaluation
- Information and advice
- Research and development

Chairperson's Foreword



The pace of change and progress for CENI as an infrastructure support organisation has been significant over the past 12 months. The specific detail of those changes is provided within this Annual Report.

The Board and staff of CENI have sought to ensure the organisation is fit for purpose at a rapidly changing time for the sector. To that end, CENI has reviewed and revised much of how the organisation operates to ensure strong and best practice governance, planning and delivery. In addition, the organisation reworked its structure, updated the key functions of staff and ensured an appropriate salary review process. The CENI Board and staff feel that this has enabled CENI to plan to meet new and emerging evaluation and monitoring needs of the sector in a more effective manner.

The context within which CENI and the voluntary and community sector are operating in Northern Ireland represents both challenges and opportunities. On the challenge side, with Government budgets being squeezed, will investment into the community and voluntary sector be regarded as a soft target in this cost saving process? This challenge alone requires the sector to produce strong, robust evidence of impact, innovation and effectiveness. However, with strong evaluation and monitoring, this challenge can be turned into an opportunity. CENI will continue to work with the Department for Social Development and other Government departments, the public sector, funders and the community and voluntary sector to ensure the highest quality monitoring and evaluation standards.

On behalf of the CENI Board I would like to sincerely thank all of the staff for embracing the many changes and related challenges the organisation has worked through over the past 12 months. The staff of any organisation is the critical resource required to meet the Strategic and Operational targets. It has been a privilege to work alongside the staff of CENI whose commitment to equipping the sector to evidence how social change is achieved, is obvious.

I would also like to thank Business in the Community (BITC) and Deloitte Consulting for their important and entirely voluntary support on the salary review process made possible through BITC's Pro-Help Scheme.

Finally, can I thank my fellow Board members and their related organisations for their ongoing active and skilled contributions to ensuring the CENI Board plays a full part in strategic planning, governance and financial accountability.

Maurice Meehan, Chairperson

Director's Report



Restructuring, Improving & Delivering Better Services

In 2005, CENI negotiated a new core funding package with the Department of Social Development's Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) based on a very challenging three year strategic plan. Now, two years into that plan, we can look back and report on a very critical period in terms of securing the organisation's longer-term sustainability.

At the core of the strategic plan was a key objective of reviewing and revising CENI's organisational structures. Management consultants, Blueprint, were commissioned to carry out a review which they produced in March 2006 recommending a series of changes to organisational and management structures. The past 12 months have seen these recommendations largely implemented, particularly with regard to management staff taking on new roles and functions. CENI was greatly helped in this process by advice and expert support provided by Deloitte Consulting through the Business in the Community Pro-Help Scheme.

The changes were accompanied by the development of a range of human resource and personnel policies and procedures to support staff in their new roles. We also adopted more integrated and inclusive planning processes to ensure that CENI continues to be responsive to the increasingly sophisticated demands of the sector. This was supported by improved procedures for monitoring and reporting on our work to a range of stakeholders, both internal and external.

In addition, we finally moved to new premises on Belfast's Ormeau Road, which provide a much improved physical environment from which CENI can develop and deliver its range of services.

Building on the substantial developments which have taken place over the past year, 2007-08 will see the continuing growth of CENI, and as a starting point, we are exploring Investors in People as a means of formally recognising and accrediting our work on human resource development, which will be an important goal for the year ahead. PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) will also be used to underpin and inform organisational development across a broad range of areas including governance, training and development and planning for quality.

2006-07 has also seen significant developments and improvements take place across all of CENI's evaluation support services. The evaluation service has been comprehensively reviewed in terms of capacity, practice and delivery. The training service has also undergone substantial development with new 'quality' focussed courses being added to our training programme. With regard to research and development, considerable headway has been made with the promotion of CENI's pilot research on mapping community assets.

This progress provides a good grounding for further enhancement and refinement of our services and how we deliver them. As we move into the third and final year of our strategic plan, the focus for CENI will be to build on our achievements to date and continue this impetus through next year and beyond, to ensure we continue to meet the evolving needs of the sector we work with.

Brendan McDonnell, Director



▲ L-R: Mike Morrissey, CENI Associate Consultant, Kat Healy, Policy & Research Officer, CENI and Brendan McDonnell, CENI Director at the launch of research findings 'Mapping Community Infrastructure in Northern Ireland'.

Research and Development

Informing Best Practice

As well as evaluating and supporting organisations, CENI also has a remit to develop and improve evaluation practice appropriate to the unique and changing circumstances of the sector.

As part of this, CENI is seeking to work with Government and the sector to inform potential investment strategies and develop appropriate evaluation models, and considerable progress has been made in 2006-07. The social capital outcome indicators framework produced by CENI has been acknowledged and promoted by Government within Positive Steps. Work continued this year to expand this original concept to develop a methodology which allows what we refer to as community assets (including social capital) to be measured at local community level and mapped across Northern Ireland. The rationale for doing so is to provide both a tool for targeting limited funding resources to communities where assets are differentially developed, but also to provide a baseline from which to measure change arising from such investments.

While deprivation will remain the key measure of need, and the means for targeting of resources, being able to measure assets allows a more focussed form of intervention to be delivered to different communities.

Also, from an evaluation perspective, any improvements (or not) in a community's assets are more likely to be measurable within the timeframe of a three to five year funding programme, than are the changes in deprivation levels.

This year saw CENI successfully piloting and promoting the benefits of the methodology to all relevant stakeholders. CENI is now negotiating with a number of Government departments and agencies to roll this out and obtain a complete mapping of community assets (down to Super Output Area level), for the whole of Northern Ireland. CENI views the assets model as a very innovative approach and one which is particularly applicable to spatially focussed programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal, community planning and social economy initiatives. Potentially, it can provide one more platform from which CENI can further develop and sustain its evaluation support services to meet the needs of organisations funded under such programmes.

Evaluation Service

Helping Organisations to Assess Performance

A Unique Approach

CENI is unique in that we are an evaluation consultancy located in and committed to the community and voluntary sector with an approach which reflects the values and needs of the sector. CENI evaluations are rigorous but sensitive, and we seek to ensure that the process we employ is an empowering one which contributes to organisational learning and development.

Continuing to Service the Sector

CENI's professional approach to evaluation has continued to be recognised and valued by the sector as reflected in the high demand for our external evaluations during 2006-07. 16 organisations benefited from the expertise and objectivity that a CENI external evaluation affords, with the majority of demand for evaluations coming from the field of health and social wellbeing. These included:

- Homefirst Community Health and Social Services Trust
- Causeway Women's Aid
- Citizens Advice
- Northern Ireland Children's Enterprise
- Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid
- Age Concern NI
- TASSK Healthy Living Centre
- Re-Solv
- Glenluce Quality Caring Centre
- Eastern Physical Activity Co-ordination Group
- North Down Community Network

Through this work, we have continued to maintain a focus not only on delivering a high quality product, but also on developing evaluation practice. As part of this, and in line with one of our key objectives for the year, we have successfully integrated learning from our research on social capital indicators into our evaluation methodology for a number of projects, including the TASSK Healthy Living Centre.

The shift from a grant to an investment culture of funding places a greater onus on voluntary and community sector organisations to identify outcomes and demonstrate the 'added value' of their work. Evaluation has an even greater role to play now than ever before in terms of sustainability of organisations. A key issue for CENI in relation to meeting increasing demand is how to develop and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation service. In response to this, we have identified the need to maximise our existing capacity, whilst also seeking to build alliances and partnerships with other evaluation providers. Groundwork has begun in this area and for the year ahead, relationship building and further development work with our associate consultants will be key tasks.

In addition, we have also looked to diversify our client base, so as to attract a better mix of both larger statutory commissioned and smaller community based contracts.

Actively Ageing Well Initiative

Actively Ageing Well (AAW) was developed by Age Concern NI in partnership with the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. CENI was commissioned to evaluate the five year programme which aimed to increase the number, range and quality of physical activity programmes for older people in Northern Ireland.

Feedback:

"These pieces of (evaluation)work have been very important in examining the development, implementation and impact of Actively Ageing Well. We have been very pleased with the rigorous analysis, professional approach and challenges that CENI has presented to us through this work."

Elma Greer of Age Concern Northern Ireland



▲ L-R: Elma Greer, Age Concern NI; Nicola McIlldoon, Deputy Director, CENI; Evelyn Gilliland, CENI Associate Consultant; Linda Barclay, Director of Programme Development, Health Promotion Agency for NI and Alan Herron, Director of Community Services, Age Concern NI at the launch event to highlight key learning from the AAW initiative.



▲ L to R - Oscar Donnelly, Homefirst Community Trust; Pat Hutchinson, Manager, Newtownabbey CAB; Stephen Murray, Investing for Health Partnership; Lyn Harvey, Homefirst Community Trust and Brian Mullan, Advice for Health Worker, Newtownabbey CAB at the launch of the Advice 4 Health evaluation report.

Advice 4 Health - Addressing Health and Social Needs Project

The Advice 4 Health project was developed by Citizens Advice in partnership with health and social care professionals and was funded by the Northern Investing for Health Partnership. CENI was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the project which aimed to provide advice and advocacy services to the public in a range of health settings in the Northern Health and Social Services Board region.

The project was developed in an attempt to reduce poverty and tackle disadvantage by maximising benefit take-up in the community, with a particular focus on older people, people with a disability, people with mental health difficulties and families living in poverty.

Feedback:

"We found the evaluation process with CENI to be very worthwhile and the independence of their evaluation invaluable. It was successful in drawing out a number of issues in relation to the impact of advice on health and well-being, and also provided us with some useful recommendations for improvement which we have taken on board."

Derek Alcorn, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice

Training and Support Service

Continuing to Build Capacity

Helping to meet a growing demand from the voluntary and community sector for practically focussed training which strengthens organisational capacity, is an important part of CENI's remit. Funders' changing requirements, and the increasing need for organisations to be able to demonstrate the 'added value' of projects and provide evidence of quality standards, means that the themes of our training - 'outcomes', 'quality' and 'evaluation' - are now more relevant than ever before.

CENI continues to address these themes through its training and support service which includes programmes of one day training courses and customised training tailored to an organisation's specific needs. In addition, CENI's longer-term programmes of training and support aim to help organisations acquire the necessary knowledge and skills required to embed self-evaluation or quality systems.

Training in Quality

Feedback from the sector has highlighted the need for training in quality. In light of this, and in line with CENI's objective to 'build on and expand our suite of training courses to incorporate new developments and meet the sector's changing needs', a new quality training module was piloted this year. 'Approaches to Quality Within the Voluntary & Community Sector' presents an overview of key quality standards. Six sessions of the course were held, with customised training on quality delivered to the Ashton Centre and Ballymagroarty & Hazelbank Community Partnership.

A number of organisations identified PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) as their preferred quality model. Developed by CES (Charities Evaluation Services), PQASSO is a quality system designed for use within the voluntary and community sector. CENI's training staff participated in mentor training with CES which allowed us to subsequently offer a new course 'Implementing PQASSO'.



▲ South Armagh Sure Start staff share learning from the self-evaluation process.

There will be additional consultation with funders and other stakeholders to explore the potential of further roll out of the PQASSO model to voluntary and community sector organisations in Northern Ireland.

Training in Outcomes

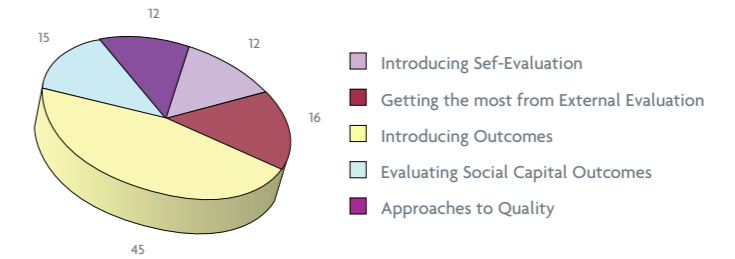
Reflecting the changing policy and funding environment, outcomes training remains in high demand with 'Introducing Outcomes' the most well attended course this year, enjoying a 45% share of all one day training participants (see Chart 1). In total, ten outcomes courses were delivered to over 100 participants.

CENI has also provided customised sessions on 'Evaluating Outcomes' to a number of organisations including RoSPA/Home Accident Prevention NI; Southern Health and Social Services Board; and Cloona Child Contact Centre.

In line with CENI's objective to 'develop and deliver programmes of training and support', a nine month outcomes training programme was delivered to the South Armagh Sure Start staff and management team. The training was linked to the four key outcome areas within the National Sure Start Initiative and complemented the organisation's existing outputs focussed evaluation methods by introducing ways of capturing qualitative evidence.

A new course 'Evaluating Social Capital Outcomes', was introduced with six sessions delivered over the year including three customised events with Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Western Investing for Health and Ballymagroarty & Hazelbank Community Partnership.

Chart 1 - % of one day training participants attending each course



Training in Evaluation

Five sessions of the 'Introducing Self-Evaluation' course were delivered in addition to three sessions on 'Getting the Most from External Evaluation'. A new course, 'Methods and Tools for Self-Evaluation' was introduced to complement the existing courses. Customised training on self-evaluation was delivered to a number of community and voluntary groups including the Volunteer Development Agency's Mentors Forum; DELTA Parenting Services and Southern Childcare Partnership. This training was also commissioned by funders to support funded project staff including the Community Festivals Fund, Rural Community Network's Womens' Sectoral Programme and Border Action.

BIG Training Project

CENI's BIG Training Project aims to make evaluation training accessible to those groups with greatest need. Under the guidance of the Project's Advisory Group, this year saw good progress being made with a number of new training modules developed. A promotional campaign, including information workshops to further build relationships with umbrella bodies and groups in the Northern and Western areas, and PR to raise awareness of the project, was rolled out. This led to the delivery of successful training sessions to both locally based issue groups and neighbourhood community groups in these areas. The coming year will see the further development of an evaluation training resource pack providing examples, case studies and feedback from project participants.



188 people attended one day training in 2006-07 compared with 121 in 2005-06. Of these, 79% were from the voluntary/community sector; 18% from the statutory sector and 3% were funders.

298 participants took part in customised training in 2006-07 compared with 251 during 2005-06.

Feedback:

"One of our biggest challenges is to provide evidence of the impact our services are having. The CENI self-evaluation training and support was invaluable in providing us with the tools and methods for capturing qualitative evidence and presenting it in a clear concise format. I found the programme with CENI to be excellent, informative and hugely beneficial."

Joanne Morgan, Project Co-ordinator, South Armagh Sure Start (customised outcomes training programme participant)

"A very good session, a thorough overview of models and approaches."

'Approaches to Quality Within the Voluntary & Community Sector' participant

"Will use in projects, in general work and use the framework to look at the less tangible outcomes e.g. improvement from partnership working."

'Evaluating Social Capital Outcomes' participant

Finance Activity

- The company has no recognised gains or losses in the year other than those included in the net movements in funds.
- All of the operations of the company are classed as continuing.
- The statement of financial activities and balance sheet are extracts only from the company's statutory financial statements. Statutory financial statements have been prepared and audited and will be filed with the Registrar of Companies in due course. The company's auditors have reported on the statutory financial statements by company law and their report is unqualified.

For year ended 31 March 2007

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2007 £	Total 2006 £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Grants - Big Lottery Fund	36,271	-	36,271	37,972
Grants - Others	-	97,506	97,506	110,905
Investment income	-	1	1	-
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Fees	-	154,582	154,582	140,416
Travel reimbursed	-	5,202	5,202	7,136
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	36,271	257,291	293,562	296,429
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities				
Activities undertaken directly	28,861	241,841	270,702	243,715
Support costs	6,706	33,798	40,504	62,312
Governance costs	-	2,062	2,062	1,500
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	35,567	277,701	313,268	307,527
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING)				
RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	704	(20,410)	(19,706)	(11,098)
Transfer between funds - capital grants	(2,444)	2,444	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(1,740)	(17,966)	(19,706)	(11,098)
Fund balances at beginning of year	5,786	45,771	51,557	62,655
Fund balances at end of year	4,046	27,805	31,851	51,557

BALANCE SHEET	2007		2006	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets	-	6,176	-	5,982
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	59,363	-	63,903	-
Short term deposits	607	-	606	-
Cash at bank and in hand	10,836	-	24,143	-
TOTALS	70,806	-	88,652	-
CREDITORS - amounts due within one year	45,131	-	43,077	-
NET CURRENT ASSETS		25,675		45,575
NET ASSETS		31,851		51,557
FUNDS				
Unrestricted		27,805		45,771
Restricted		4,046		5,786
TOTALS		31,851		51,557

Information and Advice

CENI responded to over 135 information enquiries this year of which, 77% were from the voluntary and community sector; 49% from the statutory sector and 9% from funders. CENI continued to produce and disseminate widely regular editions of CENI News, in addition to updating and maintaining its website.

Clients

CENI continues to work with a hugely diverse range of organisations. 112 groups and organisations benefited from CENI's training and evaluation services, of these 76% were from the voluntary and community sector; 30% from the statutory sector and 6% from funders.

Membership

CENI is a membership organisation with 128 members representing the voluntary and community sector, statutory sector and funders. We are committed to ensuring that our work is grounded in, and responsive to, the needs of all our stakeholders, and are currently taking steps to develop our membership base, to ensure that it is representative across a broad range of sectors.

CENI membership is free and on an individual basis. Benefits of becoming a CENI member include; access to a network of members representing a wide variety of expertise and interest in evaluation and voluntary sector issues; the opportunity to participate in seminars and events and access to CENI's services, including reference material on evaluation.