

Maurice Meehan (Chairperson)	Investing for Health, EHSSB
Kieran Harding (Treasurer)	Business in the Community
Caroline Bloomfield	North & West Belfast Health Action Zone
Gareth Harper	Rural Community Network
James Magowan	Community Foundation for NI (appointed May 07)
Gordon McCullough	NICVA
Catherine Taggart	Belfast City Council (appointed Aug 07)
Nick Mack	Associate Consultant (Observer Status)

Resignations	
Stephen Bloomer	Interaction Belfast (resigned Jan 08)
Margaret Ferguson	Community Change (resigned Oct 07)

CENI STAFF

Brendan McDonnell	Director
Nicola McIlDoon	Deputy Director
Norman Gillespie	Evaluation Manager
Gladys Swanton	Training Manager
Joanne Templeton	Training & Development Officer
Kerry McCarroll	Information Officer
Pamela Walker	Finance & Administration Officer
Justyna Samolyk	Administrative Assistant (joined Nov 07)
Gregory Cunningham	Seconded from DRD (September 04)

Annual Report

2007 - 2008

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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

Our services include:

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

WELCOME TO THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL REPORT WHICH COMES AT THE END OF OUR 2005 - 2008 STRATEGY AND CORE FUNDING PERIOD. THE REPORT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO SHOW WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED OVER THE PAST YEAR AND OUTLINE OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.



Brendan McDonnell, Director



Maurice Meehan, Chair

As we draw to the end of our current three year plan, it is worth reflecting on some of our achievements during this time. We:

- Developed a unique package of training modules on outcomes and quality systems and trained over 1000 individuals from a diverse range of organisations;
- Carried out over 50 external evaluations, in-house and with Associate Consultants, ranging from small community projects to major funding programmes;
- Conducted research to inform evidence-based policy and practice, including development of a robust tool to baseline social assets in local communities;
- Disseminated information to hundreds of organisations in a variety of formats and provided advice on a broad range of monitoring and evaluation issues;
- Restructured and modernised the organisation, underpinned by Investors in People accreditation.

At the end of this stage CENI has become a stronger, more focussed organisation, prepared and confident in promoting its niche position as the leading provider of specialist support services in evaluation.

Changing Sector, Changing Demands

A tighter fiscal environment, coupled with the changes brought about by RPA, means that the voluntary and community sector is now under more scrutiny than ever before. Our analysis of the environment indicates that evidencing outcomes and demonstrating quality service standards will remain dominant themes over the next number of years.

With our 13 years' experience, CENI is well positioned to respond strategically to the challenges ahead and play a key role in shaping the new environment. The next three years will see a strategic shift in CENI's focus and in particular in our relationship with the Voluntary & Community Unit (VCU) as core funders.

This will include widening the scope of our service provision, to extend it from working with frontline projects to an increasing focus on the provision of support at a programme level.

We are also committed to ensuring that evaluation is high on the policy agenda. CENI has initiated innovative research (such as the Social Assets research project), and we will continue to work closely with VCU to identify need and lobby for resources to enhance our policy research capacity. CENI's role as a partner in the Building Change Trust (ten year endowment from the Big Lottery Fund to help transform the sector) will also raise our profile at this level.

We will seek to negotiate a new core funding contract with VCU by clarifying and refining our role as a specialist support provider and formalising a more strategic relationship with the Unit. We look forward to engaging with members and other stakeholders to help shape our future plans, and finalise a new three year strategy 2008-2011 which will reflect the challenges facing us all.

Brendan McDonnell
Director

Maurice Meehan
Chair

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Brendan McDonnell, CENI Director and Nicola McIlldoon, Deputy Director receive the Investors in People award from Sir Reg Empey (centre).

Work continued on developing CENI as a quality-based organisation, reflecting the broader policy focus on modernisation within the sector. In particular, we focused on using recognised quality approaches to underpin and support progress in this area, and on putting in place the systems to allow us to achieve appropriate external accreditation.

Key Achievements

- CENI was awarded accreditation as an Investor in People in January 2008, providing external, objective validation of our commitment to continuous improvement.

- We also used PQASSO to provide a framework for self-assessment across a broad range of areas of organisational development.
- We took steps to enhance our internal administrative and financial processes through review and development of new systems to improve efficiency and generate the information we need to help with future planning.

Looking Ahead

Over the next year, we will continue our focus on quality, with an emphasis on enhancing quality assurance systems for our service delivery activities.

EVALUATION SERVICE

Over the last year, we continued to work on improving our consultancy service to provide high quality evaluations which support organisations to assess their achievements, report on the difference they are making and improve performance. We reviewed our existing capacity and developed systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Key Achievements

- We carried out 12 evaluations - commissioned by five statutory and seven voluntary and community organisations - spanning a range of sectors including health, arts, older people and housing.
- We developed alliances with other agencies to strengthen our capacity to meet demand, including joint working with

We evaluated Cloona Child Contact Service - a two year pilot project delivered by a partnership involving Cloona Child Contact Centre, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and Barnardos.

“We found working with CENI both challenging and rewarding. The evaluation process helped us stay focussed on the work and the value of what we were doing. It also provided useful forums to discuss and explore with children, family members, volunteers, staff and management ways to improve our performance.”

Anne O’Kelly, Cloona Child Contact Service

Blueprint Consulting and partnering Cooperation Ireland and Community Places in the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme.

- We improved our efficiency through the development of improved IT-based monitoring and tracking systems.
- We strengthened our relationship with Associate Consultants through consultation sessions which provided an opportunity for information exchange and debate on evaluation needs within the sector.

Looking Ahead

The priorities will be to further enhance the efficiency of the service, and to continue to develop partnership and team working to ensure we are meeting the demands of the sector.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Training and mentoring support on 'Implementing PQASSO' was provided to Cancer Lifeline:

“The training and support programme delivered by CENI was a very worthwhile experience. It helped to increase our knowledge of the self-assessment process and our understanding of what a quality system is. The process helped to affirm our current good practice as well as highlighting gaps to be addressed.”

Liddean McStravog, Cancer Lifeline

Training on evaluation was provided to Age Concern groups as part of the Actively Older Project:

“The training provided by CENI has benefited a large number of older people's groups across Northern Ireland delivering physical activity programmes in their local communities. It has enabled them to incorporate good evaluation practice from the outset which ensures they are delivering high quality physical activity programmes that are enjoyed by all.”

Ann Grant, Actively Older Co-ordinator, Age Concern

We continued to build capacity through a programme of open training courses and customised training and support on the themes of 'quality', 'outcomes' and 'self-evaluation'.

Key Achievements

Quality

- 14 organisations attended our two-day 'Implementing PQASSO' (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) course; customised training on this topic was delivered to a range of groups including Little Hands Sure Start in the North West.
- As part of a team of consultants, CENI participated in the Urban II North Belfast Quality Support Programme providing training and mentoring support in 'Implementing PQASSO'.
- A new course, 'Approaches to Quality Within the Voluntary & Community Sector' was added to our existing suite of courses and was delivered in a customised format to a number of groups including Volunteer Bureaux staff.

Outcomes

- A total of 46 participants attended our outcomes training courses; 'Introducing Outcomes' and 'Evaluating Social Capital Outcomes'.
- Customised sessions on outcomes were commissioned by organisations such as Housing Rights Service, Community Housing Advice Project, Bray Partnership and NICVA as part of the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities Programme.

Self-Evaluation

- There was continued demand for our Self-Evaluation training courses reflecting the ongoing importance of this theme for the sector.

- We expanded our programme of self-evaluation courses with the addition of a new module 'Methods & Tools for Self-Evaluation'. This was developed as part of the Training and Development Project funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

- Customised self-evaluation sessions were delivered to 56 participants from groups including Southern Childcare Partnership, Age Concern, Old Warren Partnership and Western Health & Social Care Trust Managed Clinical Networks.

The Big Lottery Training and Development Project

We completed year two of this Project, successfully achieving the delivery of evaluation training to target groups with limited resources, including locally-based issue groups, networks and umbrella bodies.

- 'Methods & Tools for Self-Evaluation' benefited a number of organisations participating in the Project, including children's and arts groups and those working with disability.
- Development work began on another new module, 'Analysing & Reporting' to complement our existing self-evaluation courses.
- Initial work was undertaken on producing a Self-Evaluation Resource Pack for voluntary and community organisations on evaluation themes.

Looking Ahead

We will continue to design, promote and deliver our specialist programmes of training. This will include the launch of the Big Lottery funded Self-Evaluation Resource Pack in October 2008. In line with the ongoing changes affecting the sector, and the RPA, we will also seek to expand the audience for our training programmes, from frontline projects through to programme funders and public sector providers. We will engage with stakeholders to inform the strategic development of our training services.



We continued to provide the sector with evaluation information and resources, and signpost to relevant services and support.

Key Achievements

- We took steps to improve our relationship with members through a survey, the findings of which helped us to revise how we engage with them to better meet their needs.
- We ensured that the sector was kept up-to-date with developments within the field of evaluation through a regularly updated website, monthly e-updates and two editions of CENI News.

- We received and responded to over 150 requests for information from individuals, community and voluntary organisations and funders.

- We ensured greater efficiency in dissemination and better targeting of communications materials through reviewing and developing our IT systems.

Looking Ahead

We will be launching a new and improved website in November 2008. We will also be reviewing our overall communications strategy to ensure we are meeting the needs of our stakeholders at all levels.

RESEARCH &
DEVELOPMENT

Working with the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, CENI embarked on an innovative and ambitious research project to capture quantitative and qualitative data on the 'social assets' of local communities across all 26 District Council areas in Northern Ireland. Identifying the social assets of a community can be as important as identifying its social needs since the former are crucial attributes in determining community sustainability.

Key Achievements

- Funding to take forward the research was secured from a consortium of public sector investors with a steering group established in late 2007. Field work commenced in early 2008 and a report is expected later this year.

Looking Ahead

Once generated, it is intended that this new evidence base can be used to complement other evidence (such as the Noble MDM) to help inform development of more tailored interventions appropriate to the realities of different communities.

FINANCE
ACTIVITY

For year ended 31 March 2008

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2008 £	Total 2007 £
INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATING FUNDS				
Grants - Big Lottery Fund	-	33,746	33,746	36,271
Grants - Others	137,011	-	137,011	97,506
Investment income	1	-	1	1
Incoming resources from charitable activities	161,403	-	161,403	154,582
Other incoming resources	2,913	-	2,913	5,202
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	301,328	33,746	335,074	293,562
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities	(292,802)	(33,746)	(326,548)	(311,206)
Governance costs	(1,750)	-	(1,750)	(2,062)
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	(294,552)	(33,746)	(328,298)	(313,268)
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES				
BEFORE TRANSFERS	6,776	-	6,776	(19,706)
Transfer between funds	1,236	(1,236)	-	-
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR	8,012	(1,236)	6,776	(19,706)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	27,805	4,046	31,851	51,557
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	35,817	2,810	38,627	31,851

BALANCE SHEET	2008 £	2007 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	-	4,441
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	105,080	-
Cash at bank and in hand	694	-
TOTALS	105,774	70,806
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	(71,588)	-
NET CURRENT ASSETS	-	34,186
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	-	38,627
NET ASSETS	-	38,627
FUNDS		
Restricted income funds	-	2,810
Unrestricted income funds	-	35,817
TOTAL FUNDS	-	38,627