



What can be learned from National and Regional Variations Across the UK

Ian Walters
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Enhancing Development, creating opportunities

Action Mental Health



Provides vocational training, personal development, employment preparation and employment support programmes for people with mental ill health and/or learning disability.

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AMH



- **Founded in 1963**
- **Today, 14 locations across N. Ireland**
- **Helps more than 1500 people each year**
- **Budget of £4.5 million**
- **140 staff**

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AMH – Source of Funds

- **Largely public sector funded**
- **3 Government Departments**
- **6 Health & Social Care Trusts**
- **Big Lottery Fund**
- **Private Foundations & Trusts**

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Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) in N. Ireland



- **4,500 organisations**
- **Employs 28,000 people**
 - (4.5% of NI workforce)
- **72,000 (est.) volunteers**
- **Annual Income £657m**
 - £246m from gov't departments
 - £147m from public donations

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VCS in N. Ireland



- **Has much in common with GB sector, but**
- **Shaped by 30 years of civil unrest**
- **Reliant on EU funding, once plentiful, now disappearing**

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N. Ireland VCS - Government Relationships



- Direct Rule to 1999
- 10 years of devolution and Direct Rule
- “Jekyll and Hyde” or “Curate’s Egg” relationship?

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N. Ireland VCS - Government Relationships



Policy/Relationship framework

- Department of Social Development is lead department
- DSD Minister, Margaret Ritchie, MLA is lead Minister
- “Positive Steps”
- Compact
- Joint Forum

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N. Ireland VCS - Government Relationships



Policy/Relationship framework

- “Partners For Change : Government Strategy for Support of the Voluntary and Community Sector 2001-2004” *Published by DSD*
- Seen as ineffective

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Policy Framework & Development

- Task Force announced by Direct Rule Minister, February 2003
- Task Force produced consultation paper “Pathways for Change”, December 2003
- Key themes:-
 - Funding
 - Accountability
 - Relationships
 - Infrastructure

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Policy/Relationship framework

- Task Force report “Investing Together” published October 2004
- Government comprehensive response “Positive Steps” published March 2005
- Welcomed by voluntary community sector

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“Positive Steps”

Proposed:-

- Longer term funding with measured outcomes
- Community Investment Fund
- Modernisation Fund
- Full Cost Recovery
- Quality Standards
- Lead Departments for funding and monitoring

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N. Ireland VCS - Government Relationships



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“Positive Steps”

Proposed:-

- Lead Minister
- Higher standards of governance
- Charities regulation
- Joint Government/Voluntary Sector Forum
- Revitalise Compact
- Sector involvement in wider policy development

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N. Ireland VCS - Government Relationships



Where are we today in Devolved N. Ireland?

- “Positive Steps”
 - Limited success
 - Seen as having no impact on VCS
- Compact (published 1998)
 - Considered to be totally ineffective

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- **Joint Forum**
 - Considered to be ineffective

- **VCS disillusioned**
 - 11 “lost” years
 - Local politicians don't understand VCS role

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Where do we go from here?

- **Not all doom and gloom**
- **VCS continues to play vital role in delivering public services (eg. health and disability) and serving local communities especially in disadvantaged areas**
- **Good relationships between individual organisations and gov't departments and agencies**

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The future?

- The Joint Forum continues
- VCS actively lobbying for change
- Possible white paper under discussion to replace compact
- Examining models in England, Scotland & Wales

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