

The Building Change Trust

VCSE Futures

Launch of the research report into the impact of collaboration on beneficiaries and discussion on future actions needed to support collaboration in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland

Thursday 29 September 2017 at NICVA

Present

Name	Organisation
Amanda Cowden	CLARE CIC
Amanda Doherty	Big Lottery Fund
Ben Cairns	IVAR
Brendan Patterson	Focus on Family
Conor Flanagan	Supporting Communities
Carol Forster	Ni Environment Link
Eileen Jack	Big Lottery Fund
Stevie Johnston	Interaction Institute
Janet Flynn	Belfast City Council
Majella McCloskey	Centre for Effective Services
Miranda Lewis	IVAR
Niamh Devlin	Centre for Effective Services
Sal Brennan	Amps Studios
Sara Van der Valk	
Sharon Polson	Department for Communities
Stephen Macdonald	Department for the Economy
Robin Wilson	Independent researcher
Jennie Dunlop	Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Council
Gretta Thompson	CLARE CIC
Ricky O’Rawe	Stellar Leadership
Janice Bunting	Victim Support NI
Dermot McCann	Belfast City Council
Tracy Mawhinney	Belfast City Council

Nigel McKinney, Director of Operations for Building Change Trust introduced the event providing a background to the Trust, its role in providing support for collaboration through commissioning Collaboration NI and summarised the agenda for the afternoon.

He introduced the first speaker Ben Cairns, Director of the Institute for Voluntary Action Research.

Ben summarised IVAR’s role in working with the Trust and the CollaborationNI partners to both evaluate and assist the programme with planning and latterly in

completion of the research into the impact of collaboration on beneficiaries. He spoke of the need for support with collaboration as an enduring need within the sector because it is difficult and challenging and also that support for collaboration was not as simple as funders and policy makers providing financial aid for support. All stakeholders had a role in enabling and supporting collaboration not least VCSE organisations themselves who always had to consider their role and relationship with others in the context of meeting the needs of beneficiaries.

Miranda Lewis from IVAR summarised the findings of the research.

Her presentation is available here.



IVAR_ Miranda presentation Arial ver

Miranda was followed by Brendan Patterson from Focus on Families.

His presentation is available here.



Brendan Patterson presentation 280917.

Following that the audience were asked to log on to the mentimeter website and consider the following questions with the answers provided set out below.

Why do you think it is a good idea for collaboration to be supported?
It is resource intensive
Allows more holistic experience for users
Can have greater impact by collaborating. No one has all the answers on their own
Its an emotional process and an independent person/team can help. It also supports best practice and provides challenge to the groups
The best way for people who need services to get full access to what is available in communities. Personalising support
Increased spread of options to clients. Greater impact on service users
Sharing expertise leads to better services for everyone
To ensure a thriving vol sector can support service users
To deliver better services for local people
All orgs need to make the best use of limited resources and to maximise impact to the community.
Allows for more effective informed approach for orgs.
To demonstrate the sector can deliver on PFG outcomes and lead Government out of silo working
Because it's bloody difficult to do on your own
Supports commitment to vision and common goals

Provides focus and direction
For the service user what matters is the service, not who delivers the service. Collaboration makes a streamlined service provision easier.
It will benefit service users
Because it's a necessity
Collaboration is best way to deal with complex problems.
Because when it works it has great benefits but it needs supported as groups are already extremely busy with other stuff!

Can you think of circumstances where supporting it would be a bad idea?
Where the fit isn't right
Where does not promote complementary services (if different) or is driven by financial rationalisation (if same)
When it does not focus on people who will benefit
When merger is imposed externally. When values and missions don't align
No but it is difficult in terms of getting community buy in, not an easy option but a much more effective one, needs to also share power
Need for clear roles and responsibilities for all participating groups
When people really value the community-based aspect of the service- it provides a safe space to talk to people they know
Where it enables organisational survival at all costs, rather than focusing on service users
If it only continued to prop up organisations and structures without reviewing difference to local people
Only useful when adding value as well as making best use of resources.
Where the impact on beneficiaries is not the main focus.
Forced collaboration linked to budget challenges.
No
Generally no but caution and extra support required with forced partnerships
Forced
No
When it's to benefit the organisations not the beneficiaries of services
If the issue does not need a collaborative approach - I.e. non complex issue
Where groups haven't yet made a genuine commitment to work together

Participants were then asked to get into groups of two with each group given one of the following questions. Each group was asked to walk together for 10 minutes to explore and share their answers to the questions.

- What action needs to be taken by **Policy Makers** to support collaboration?
- What action needs to be taken by **Funders** to support collaboration?
- What action needs to be taken by **VCSE organisations** to support collaboration?

Each group was then asked to sit together with other groups dealing with the same question and write their answers to each question on to large post it notes which were put on the wall under the respective headings. A representative of each larger group was asked to read the answers with clarification sought.

Finally each participant was given sticky dots to use to highlight what for them was the most important action. The only caveat being that they had to use at least one dot in each category of Funders, Policy-makers and VCSE organisations.

The results were as follows

Funders
Transparency about what the p[roblem/issues that collaboration may bring for organisations (4)
Funders should ask those undertaking collaboration – what worked well and what could be improved (6)
Funders themselves should collaborate (8)
Funders need to define what they mean by collaboration
Should funders make collaboration compulsory?
Resource collaboration support – with time and money – over the long term (12)
Funders should facilitate match making – closing triangles and relationship building (8)
People are not talking up collaboration – funders should be publicising where collaborations have worked e.g. Inspire (6)

Policymakers
See more cross sector collaboration (1)
Government needs to collaborate better itself – ‘whole of government working’ (12)
Government could act as a broker to encourage collaboration in a genuine way (7)
Encourage collaboration through community planning processes at local authority level (4)
Separate collaboration from competition for funding – collaboration on service design ahead of commissioning/tender - but take some risks on who is in the room. (10)
Government needs to join up its relations with individual organisations or projects (8)

VCSE sector
Listen to service users – use their reflections to improve services – think how referrals can identify potential partners (23)
Collaboration champions – people in the sector who have experience and learning – can share their experience and can help other collaborations drive their work and their own (12)
The need to create /have lead in time for collaborative working – candid conversations – mapping skills and resources – networking (14)

The event concluded with an evaluation using Mentimeter as follows

What was good about today’s event
Taking time out to think and learn about collaboration
Enjoyed the walk and talk exercise as a way of generating discussion and using stars. Enjoyed the honest reflections on collaboration
Innovative facilitation. IVAR is excellent

Putting collaboration high on the agenda and being inspired to continue the journey
Meeting other people and learning from them
Positive & inspiring. The participative activities were good to put the learning in practice
Brendan's presentation was superb
Good chance to share experiences and ideas with new people.
Opportunity to discuss collaboration in a non contentious way. Like the mentimetre.
Clear presentations and examples. Menti, and fluid format
Three questions from Brendan: "do you want to collaborate, what is best for beneficiaries and are you prepared to work harder 4 less credit
Participatory approaches plus highly informative, reflective presentations
Brendan's contribution brings the benefit of collaboration to life. All of it great, good conversations
Enjoyed Brendan's presentation as it was very clear from his case study that collaboration can work for the benefit of communities.
The networking opportunity.
Listening to other opinions and networking
Presentations Walk and talk Facilitation
Knowing that there are lots of great people involved in collaborations out there

Is there anything we could have done better?
No
No
More time to explore actions different groups need to take as conversation was really interesting
Surprised it was so few attending
Happy with today's event
No it was great
No!
No, very engaging.
No
Put this work in better context - RISP consultation, PFG.
An announcement of 10 year funding for CollaborationNI 2.0 to support collaboration for purpose
Great event
Don't think so
Longer discussion time at the end.
Bit more time for discussion BUT was a really spot on session
More discussion time but that's always the case
No
More time to discuss ideas generated on post its
More q and a time