



The Open Government Partnership: What Could It Mean in Northern Ireland?



**Exploratory Research commissioned by Building Change Trust
undertaken by Peter Osborne, Rubicon Consulting**

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INTRODUCTION

The Building Change Trust was established in 2008 by the Big Lottery Fund with a National Lottery grant of £10million as an investment for community capacity building and promotion of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Northern Ireland. The Trust supports the VCSE sector in Northern Ireland through the development, delivery of, and learning from a range of programmes including commissioned work, awards programmes and other interventions.

Between now and 2018, our resources will be used to support the VCSE sector to achieve more and better collaboration, increased sustainability and to be a learning and influential sector. This work will be carried out across five overarching thematic areas: Collaboration, Social Finance, Social Innovation, Inspiring Impact and Creative Space for Civic Thinking with Leadership as a sixth cross cutting theme.

As part of its *Creative Space for Civic Thinking* work, the Building Change Trust identified the international Open Government Partnership initiative as a potential vehicle for dialogue and partnership between government and the VCSE sector in Northern Ireland around enhancing public participation, as well as transparency and accountability, in governance.

To this end, the Trust supported a number of activities from May 2014 including a study/learning visit to the OGP Europe conference in Dublin, a seminar on the OGP in Belfast and a first series of meetings for an embryonic open government network.

In order to assist in the development of the latter the Trust commissioned Peter Osborne to undertake this research to identify the views of stakeholders in the public sector, the VCSE sector, broader civil society and amongst politicians as well as make recommendations on the way forward.

The overall purpose is to produce an analysis to inform a potential campaign and advocacy strategy to seek implementation of the Open Government Partnership in Northern Ireland.

The research included:

- ✚ A review of the Open Government Partnership national action plans in the United Kingdom and Ireland;
- ✚ Interviews with a sample of those from the various sectors working with or within government and those with an interest in open government;
- ✚ A survey of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector;
- ✚ A series of meetings with the embryonic open government network;
- ✚ A consultation event at the end of the process which will include input from the Minister for Finance and Personnel in the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Cabinet Office, the co-chair of the Irish Open Government Partnership process, Involve UK as the body co-ordinating civil society input to the third UK Action plan and several other speakers.

While a relatively small and time-bound piece of research it has focussed on making recommendations to provide a focus to an open government network going forward. These recommendations may need further exploration and development. They need to be agreed by the embryonic network as part of a more detailed action plan and programme.

The recommendations contained within this report provide short, medium and long term actions in a timeline attached as an appendix.

This report will be finalised and updated following the consultation event and launch of the NI Open Government Network on 5th November 2014.

WHAT IS THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP?



The Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative was launched in September 2011 at the United Nations General Assembly, with eight founding countries – the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Mexico, Brazil, Norway, Philippines, Indonesia and South Africa. As of October 2014 there are over 60 participating countries.

The initiative aims to increase transparency, participation and accountability, recognising that top-down government is not able to satisfy the needs and expectations of the citizens that government represents. In the foreword to the current and second UK Action Plan the Minister for the Cabinet Office which has lead responsibility for the Open Government Partnership in the UK, Francis Maude MP, states:

“Citizens are demanding that the state should be their servant, not their master, and that information that governments hold should be open for everyone to see...Transparency, participation and accountability provide the essential foundation for economic, social and political progress by increasing the openness of institutions and public processes while maintaining and respecting the privacy of individuals.”¹

“Citizens are demanding that the state should be their servant, not their master, and that information that governments hold should be open for everyone to see”

**Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP,
Minister for the Cabinet Office,
United Kingdom**

¹ Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP Open Government Partnership UK National Action Plan 2013-2015, p3. Accessible at <http://tinyurl.com/mngpwjh>

Countries seeking to become a member of the OGP must meet four eligibility criteria although the initiative itself accepts the entry criteria are not rigorously applied with a high entry level bar.

These four criteria are:

- ✚ **Fiscal transparency** – timely publication of essential budget documents and an open budget system;
- ✚ **Access to information** – information law guaranteeing the public’s right to information and access to government data;
- ✚ **Disclosures related to elected or senior public officials** – rules requiring public disclosure of income and assets essential to anti-corruption and open, accountable government;
- ✚ **Citizen engagement** – citizen participation and engagement in policy-making and governance including basic protection of civil liberties.

Organisations, having joined the Open Government Partnership initiative must then:

1. Work with civil society to develop an Open Government Partnership national action plan;
2. Implement Open Government Partnership commitments in accordance with the action plan timeline;
3. Prepare an annual self-assessment report;
4. Participate in the independent reporting mechanism research process;

5. Contribute to peer-learning across the Open Government Partnership.

Therefore, the national action plans of participating countries need to involve civil society organisations, be ambitious and keep the country moving forward in open government terms and implement commitments made.

The Open Government Partnership also sets five grand challenges for members including:

- ✚ Improving public services;
- ✚ Increasing public integrity;
- ✚ More effectively managing public resources;
- ✚ Creating safer communities;
- ✚ Increasing corporate accountability.

The UK published its first national action plan in September 2011. The second and current national action plan was published in October 2013 for the period 2013-2015. It is embedded within the Cabinet Office which leads in the roll out of the action plan that includes commitments by other government departments.

The Cabinet Office recognised that the first national action was too focussed on open data, not sufficiently inclusive of civil society organisations and included many actions already planned by government. The second action plan sought to redress those issues and in working towards a third national action plan the UK Government has recognised the need for greater engagement with civil society organisations. Involve (UK) is an independently

funded organisation that has been selected by civil society members of the Partnership to assist in co-ordinating the partnership between government and civil society.

The Irish Government joined the OGP initiative in July 2014 and published its first and current national action plan in July 2014 for the period 2014-2016. It is led by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The national action plan in Ireland was developed through a partnership between government and civil society organisations, which ultimately was co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and a representative of civil society.

In both the UK and Ireland, those involved accept the process is evolving and will become more inclusive and ambitious as the initiative matures. That includes the involvement and impact of the VCSE sector as a partner in the process.

The UK national action plan includes 21 commitments under five themed headings².

With the exception of commitments 14 and 9 relating to international aid and aspects of procurement for international aid and construction, which are excepted matters, all other commitments are matters that have been transferred to the regional assembly in Northern Ireland. There is one commitment relating specifically to Scotland that commits the Scottish Executive to endorsing openness in procurement. Two commitments relate to Wales in association with England.

The VCSE organisations included as part of the collaboration that helped to develop the national action plan (and that have been tasked in the national

² Appendix Two lists the 21 commitments for the United Kingdom second national action plan, 2013-2015

action plan to follow through on commitments) are largely London-based. Commitments, although part of a national action plan, have no explicit traction in the devolved areas.

The UK second national plan accepts that the partnership between civil society representatives and government strengthened the commitments.

It also outlines its desire to expand the OGP UK Civil Society Network to broaden its reach and become more representative of the United Kingdom as a whole.

The first Irish OGP national action plan includes 27 commitments over these three main areas over two years:

- ✚ Open data and transparency;
- ✚ Citizen participation;
- ✚ Strengthening governance and accountability.

In a co-foreword with Minister Brendan Howlin TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the civil society representatives said:

“Whilst the national action plan does not fulfil all of civil society’s aspirations, it represents a positive step towards greater openness and we remain committed to working constructively with government to deliver these commitments.”³

“Whilst the national action plan does not fulfil all of civil society’s aspirations, it represents a positive step towards greater openness”

Civil Society Representatives in the first Irish Open Government national action plan

³ Open Government Partnership Ireland National Action Plan, July 2014. Accessible at: <http://tinyurl.com/ohc7veh>

The plan also references a report of a Working Group on Citizen Engagement established by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government which recommended the establishment of public participation networks in each local authority area to enable the public to take an active role in policy making and oversight committees.

The Open Government Partnership initiative is still early in its development, whether in the United Kingdom or in Ireland. It is coming to terms with how best to engage civil society, how to involve the regions and integrate the aims of the initiative and its various commitments.

The outcome statement of the OGP High-level Event on Citizen Action and Government Responsiveness on 24th September 2014 reflected some of the identified ongoing priorities for the UK and Ireland:

- ✚ Ireland will share best practice, knowledge and expertise with its Northern Ireland counterparts and assist each other in relation to Open Data;

✚ The United Kingdom commits to keep all of its national open data tools free for anyone to reuse, and to provide advice and documentation on how to use them;

✚ The United Kingdom and Ireland, amongst other nations including the USA and Netherlands, commit to supporting initiatives to make government-held data more accessible to the public.

Therefore, while still in its early stages there is much potential for further engagement with the VCSE, greater accessibility for the public, more public use of open data, and potential for cross-border sharing of practice and knowledge.

CONTEXT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The commitments in the UK national action plan for 2013-2015 relate almost exclusively to matters that were transferred to the Northern Ireland Executive from 1998 with the Northern Ireland Act and with subsequent agreements. Policing and justice was devolved in March 2010.

Commitments 9 (partially), 14 and 21 relate to international aid and procurement for international aid construction contracts, which are excepted matters considered never to be matters that could be devolved along with others such as defence, foreign policy and matters of currency.

The other commitments can be referenced back to departments within Northern Ireland. While the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is the regional equivalent of the UK Cabinet Office within the Northern Ireland Executive, the lead department bringing forward a reform agenda in Northern Ireland is the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), led by Minister Simon Hamilton MLA. The Minister is being advised by a Ministerial Advisory Council with specialists from outside Northern Ireland as well as within.

In a recent speech to the annual conference of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) on 25th September 2014, Minister Hamilton outlined his thinking on public sector reform. In the speech he said that “the problem with a proposition for reform that is built purely on the necessity of cuts is that it doesn’t inspire”. The aim of reform was more than that: “renewing, redesigning, rethinking, restructuring and reforming our government is about enhancing citizens’ experience of public services”.

“Renewing, redesigning, rethinking, restructuring and reforming our government is about enhancing citizens’ experience of public services”
Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland Executive

The Minister outlined ten core principles for reform which included:

- ✚ Openness, relating to data and policy development especially with the charitable and community sectors;
- ✚ Innovation;
- ✚ Outcome focus;
- ✚ Collaboration;
- ✚ Partnerships;
- ✚ Prevention;
- ✚ Competitiveness;
- ✚ Technological advances;
- ✚ Talent;
- ✚ Culture.⁴

The reform programme within the DFP is still being developed. It is clear that it will involve, amongst other things, a number of initiatives with resonance to the ten core principles outlined by the Minister.

The DFP is leading in inviting the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to undertake its first sub-national public governance review. The OECD will provide strategic advice for improving public services including utilising international good practice.

A recently announced Public Sector Innovation Laboratory will bring together thinkers from different sectors to brainstorm around improving public services. The first priorities identified are procurement, big data and dementia.

⁴ Speech by Minister Simon Hamilton MLA at CIPFA annual conference 25th September 2014

The DFP has also established a SpatialNI portal to provide geospatial mapping of digital data and a Change Fund to resource, with small amounts of funding, cross departmental co-operation.

In partnership with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), DFP set an open data challenge that saw £5,000 awarded to Datactics to help businesses in Northern Ireland use public service data in innovative ways.

Two other initiatives within the DFP include an “ideas engine” initiative with staff at the department and an initiative called “16x16” which aims to see 16 transnational public services made available through digital channels by 2016.

The DFP is seeking to examine how it can better engage with civil society to inform and shape the reform agenda and input to policy development.

These are initiatives separate to the 21 commitments within the UK national action plan but with clear linkage to some of the ambition and targets for the national action plan.

The Open Government Partnership process has had little coverage or traction in Northern Ireland. The delivery of aspects of those 21 commitments is therefore variable.

Consequently, as the United Kingdom develops its third action plan in 2015 it may wish to reflect on linkage to the regional assemblies and the traction of the process as a whole within the devolved areas.

Open Data

The UK national action plan’s 21 commitments include five that relate to open data (1, 5, 10, 12, and 20).

The DFP, as outlined, has included open data as a theme within the reform agenda which it has promoted in recent years. The review being undertaken by the OECD may further explore issues around providing an inventory of datasets and their potential for use and reuse outside the public sector.

The Public Sector Innovation Laboratory has already explored regulatory impact assessment. Further Laboratories will explore practice and ideas development around using open data including in areas such as procurement and use/reuse of data which are commitments within the UK OGP national action plan.

Health

The UK national action plan’s health commitments relate to accessing information on-line; and making information more accessible to citizens about their own care, enabling them to influence service provision (2 and 15). The detail of these commitments relates to an accreditation scheme to allow people to assess their progress in the NHS, the ability to order repeat prescriptions and book appointments on-line, view their GP records online and have secure electronic communication with their GP practice.

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland have no comprehensive plans for this type of communication to be part of an accredited scheme in the region but there are specific initiatives to increase accessibility.

The Department of Health is currently consulting on making anonymous data from patients in Northern Ireland more accessible for the purposes of delivering research and designing services within the public sector. It does

not extend to how citizens may access personal data for use and to help influence service provision.

Local Government

The 21 UK national action plan commitments include two directed specifically at local authorities (3 and 19). They include a commitment to revise the local authority data transparency code to give more power to citizens to contribute to decision-making processes and secondly to free up data to be discovered and reused by third parties.

In Northern Ireland, local authorities are currently undergoing a major reform process, mostly related to the areas they cover (reduced from 26 Councils to 11) and enhanced powers for a smaller number of larger Councils.

Local authorities in Northern Ireland, in association with the Department of the Environment (DoE) and their umbrella representative body the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), are not exploring open data in this way as part of the reform agenda. Priorities include introducing new powers such as planning, regeneration and community planning, and bringing Councils up to a level of competence on the issues. There are also a range of other decisions, some of them sensitive, that the Councils will have to address in the first months. This may include the development of improved guidelines for consultation and engagement but it is not yet clear.

The openness agenda is mainly focussed currently on whether full and committee meetings of the Council should be open to the public and media. There are some individual initiatives being undertaken such as that supported by Newry and Mourne District Council which is exploring the use of datasets.

Community Planning and a duty of consultation may help, over a period of time, to transform the contribution that local government can make to the debate and to good practice.

Crime

The UK national action plan commitments on crime (6 and 8) relate to bringing together all anti-corruption efforts under one cross-government anti-corruption plan, and establishing a working group to ensure greater access to police records in England and Wales.

The 2010 Bribery Act was also extended to Northern Ireland and public agencies are expected to develop their own anti-bribery and anti-corruption policies. There are strong ethical guidelines for people in public office.

The single policing agency in Northern Ireland may also address some of the need in the UK national action plan for bringing all of the corruption efforts under one cross-government agency. However, public agencies in Northern Ireland do still produce separate anti-corruption and anti-bribery plans.

Procurement

The UK national action plan commitments for procurement (9 and 13) relate to transparency in government funded construction projects, domestic and international. It also includes a Scottish Executive commitment to endorse open contracting and improve its transparency in procurement practices.

These are less relevant commitments to Northern Ireland as written, given that they are referring to Scotland and to the target of establishing four new national Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) programmes. These largely relate to international aid contracts.

However, the desirability of transparency in procurement, especially relating to the social economy sector, is an issue for those within that sector in Northern Ireland. Practitioners in Northern Ireland would welcome a similar commitment by the Northern Ireland Executive, as made by the Scottish

Executive, which may be applicable broadly to procurement within the public sector in Northern Ireland.

Policy Making

The 21 commitments in the UK national action plan include four (11, 16, 17, 18) that relate to how policy and services are devised and how the public is engaged in those processes.

The national action plan seeks a strong legislative framework to encourage workers to speak up about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice without fear of reprisal. It established a review of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act which will draw conclusions by 2018, as part of a five year process.

The plan commits to five pilots in open policy making – three of which have started and none of which are planned in Northern Ireland.

The plan also seeks to involve the public in policy making around complex science and technology issues, and to publish legislation to help engage the public in changes to the law.

In Northern Ireland there are initiatives to inform the public on related policy matters but none under the auspices of the Open Government Partnership initiative. Regulation around employment protection, equality and human rights may, in some ways, be even more robust in Northern Ireland. They are still reserved matters.

Pilot projects around open policy making are not being prioritised in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the discussion in recent years has been focussed more on a relative lack of law and policy making by the Assembly; and some policies such as *Together: Building a United Community* where there was a lack of engagement with the public and civil society.

The introduction of Community Planning processes for the new Super Councils is an opportunity to explore policy making at that local level in conjunction with other public agencies and the VCSE sector. However, most Councils are of the view it will take one or two terms (eight to ten years) for Community Planning to be implemented to most effect.

Structure

An underlying requirement within the Open Government Partnership initiative is that civil society is involved in developing national action plans in partnership with government. To do so, networks and partnerships have been created in the UK and Ireland. They have worked to a large extent, although on all sides there is an expectation that the relationship will get stronger and more productive.

In Northern Ireland the Open Government Partnership has gained little traction and there is no existing open government network to campaign on open government issues.

However, there is a strong, knowledgeable and assertive voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. In 2011 the main organisations in that sector signed a Concordat with all of the government departments in Northern Ireland that agreed a vision, values and principles about how the sector and government would work together.

The Ministers of all 12 government departments signed the Concordat on behalf of their department, including both the First Minister and deputy First Minister for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

A Joint Forum was established as an operational outcome of the Concordat. It meets 2/3 times per annum and produces an annual report and update. It is jointly chaired by a member of the Department for Social Development's

Voluntary and Community Unit and a representative of the Voluntary Sector Group.

Examples of work prioritised by the Joint Forum in its annual report, 2013, include commitment action teams on addressing bureaucracy, structural reform and outcome-focussed approach to funding.

On the VCSE side, 13 organisations initially signed the Concordat. In the 2014 annual report 17 organisations were represented on the Forum including the umbrella group for the sector the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), Age NI, Churches Community Work Alliance, Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network, Gingerbread, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, North West Community Forum, Rural Community Network, Women’s Resource and Development Agency, Save the Children, Sandy Row Community Forum, Carers NI, East Belfast Community Development Agency, Disability Action, Voluntary Arts Ireland, Victim Support, World Wildlife Fund.

The Concordat was designed to “lay the foundation for a partnership based on mutual trust and respect and will open up opportunities for more active participation by the voluntary and community sector in developing public policy. It will enable the energy and talent both within the government and the sector to work together towards the development of a better civil society”⁵

The DFP has indicated the Joint Forum may be a vehicle to engage with the VCSE regarding the reform agenda.

Of course, the Joint Forum was never meant to lobby specifically for open government and was not intended to act as an open government network. It is therefore one vehicle that any open government network could work with.



“The Joint Forum [is] gaining recognition as a vital link in the machinery of government for policy development”

Joint Forum Chairs

Michael Donnelly, Voluntary and Community Unit

Anne O’Reilly, Voluntary Sector Group

⁵ Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government, 2010, p2. Accessible at <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation-concordat-for-relationships-between-govt-vc-sector.pdf>

Overview of Key Issues:

- ✦ The DFP and its Minister have given much thought to the reform agenda already including open data and policy development with the VCSE;
- ✦ However, the reform agenda is also taking place within the context of budgetary pressures and a limited budget;
- ✦ There appears to be potential and an openness from those involved with the UK and Irish OGP Action Plans for linking Northern Ireland into both those processes;
- ✦ The UK national action plan has little explicit traction within Northern Ireland, due largely to the fact that almost all of the 21 commitments relate to devolved or transferred matters;
- ✦ There was no consultation or formal involvement of the VCSE in Northern Ireland or government departments in the development of the UK national action plan;
- ✦ There are no specific Northern Ireland commitments in the national action plan and no expectation that any of them would involve Northern Ireland;
- ✦ None of the five pilot open policy making pilots in the national action plan for the UK will apply to Northern Ireland;
- ✦ There appears to be a lack of political and departmental champions for the Open Government Partnership initiative, partly due to lack of awareness and due to other priorities within departments, with the exception of the DFP;
- ✦ An agreement already exists between government and the VCSE around consultation and involvement in policy making: the 2011 Concordat and subsequent Joint Forum which meets 2/3 times per annum. It has working groups on key issues including a toolkit for Concordat compliance, outcome-focused approach to funding and addressing bureaucracy;
- ✦ The DFP is likely to work through the Joint Forum as a vehicle to link with the VCSE sector.

SURVEY OF THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR

In drafting this report we wanted to hear directly from people working within the VCSE sector with an interest in open government.

The section below outlines some key findings from the survey. Some of the positive work highlighted in the previous section comes from that outlined in open questions by respondents to the survey.

A full copy of the survey and anonymised responses, including responses to open ended questions is held by the Building Change Trust.

A summary of key issues is located at the end of the section.

A total of 182 people participated in a survey of opinion of people who largely worked within the voluntary, community and social economy sector (VCSE). Of those replying to the survey 78% worked within the voluntary and community sector, and 10% worked with a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The remainder were with the private sector, local government, central government or designated other.

There was a good gender balance of those who participated in the survey – 49% male and 51% female. However, few under 25 year olds participated, reflecting the composition of the VCSE sector targeted – 1% of those replying were 25 or under, while 17% were aged 26-40 years old, 64% aged 41-60 years and 17% were over 60 years of age.

Most of those replying worked in an organisation based in Belfast (59%), while the remainder were based elsewhere in Northern Ireland, the lowest being based in County Armagh (1%). However, there was a very good spread

of service provision from those organisations replying, with 44% or more covering all counties.

There were few variations for the results when cross-tabulated by age, gender and location. Results that did stand out for people from different backgrounds included:

- ✚ The 26-40 year age range were much more likely to support open government network actions than the over 40 year olds;
- ✚ The over 60 year age range were less positive about the Northern Ireland Executive's record in creating safer communities – 8% of over 60s thought the record was very good/good compared to 18% of 41-60 year olds and 20% of 25-40 year olds;
- ✚ An online campaign by the open government network was considered critical by 27% of over 60s compared to 43% of 41-60 year olds and 69% of people aged 25-40 year old;
- ✚ Women tended to believe the open government partnership priorities were more critical than men generally, such as the 81% of women who thought a legal framework for whistleblowing was critical compared to 63% of men; 88% of women believed it critical to have openness in procurement compared to 69% of men; and 84% of women thought open data critical compared to 56% of men;
- ✚ The need for balanced and representative involvement in an open government network campaign was considered critical by 87% of women compared to 57% of men;
- ✚ 75% of women considered public participation in delivery of services critical compared to 51% of men.

General Results

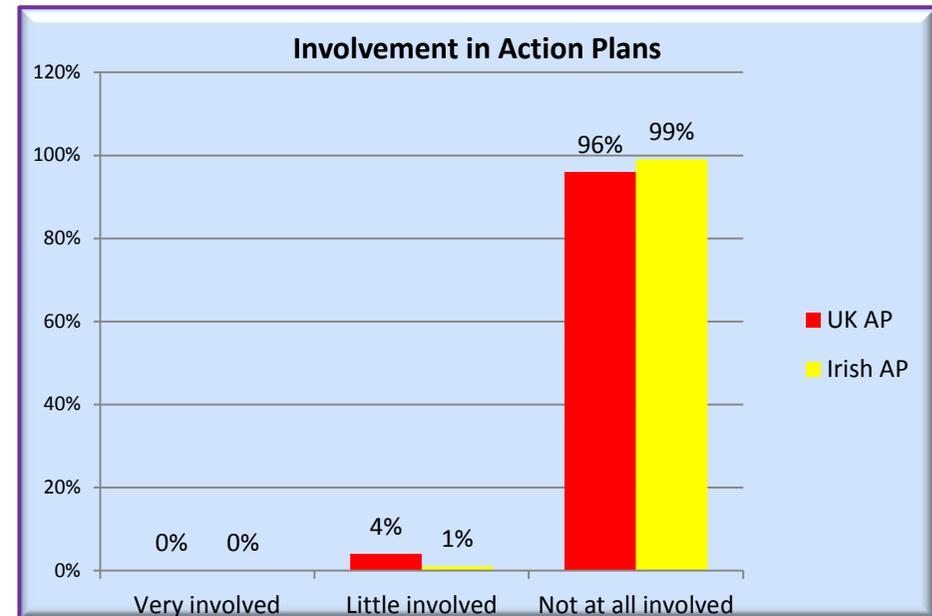
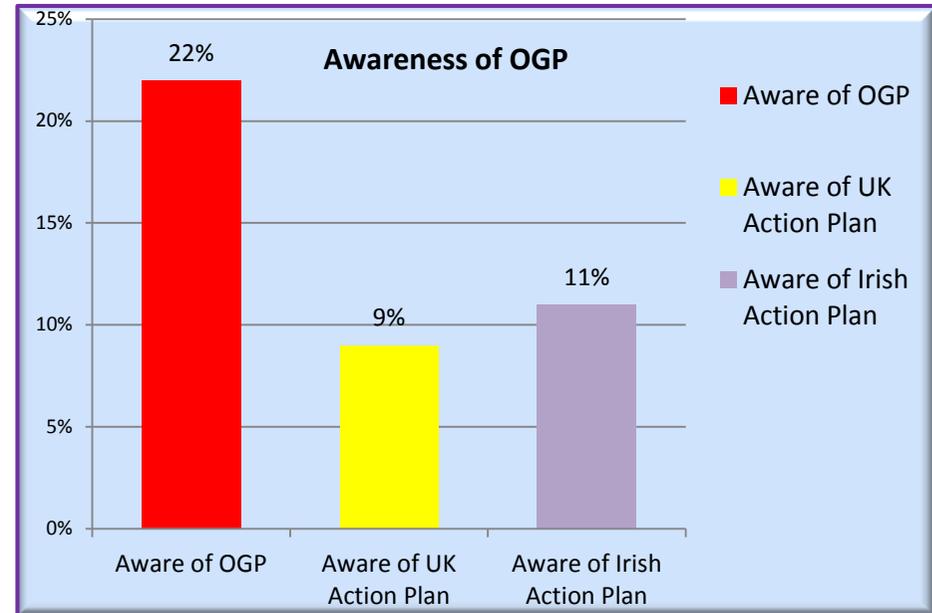
There was some awareness of the Open Government Partnership with 22% expressing awareness. However this dropped significantly when expressing awareness of the production of both the UK and Irish Open Government Partnership Action Plans.

Even fewer were involved in identifying, shaping or influencing the specific commitments in the UK or Irish Open Government Partnership Action Plans.

The survey results also reflect the overwhelming feedback during consultation interviews, that those within all sectors had little or no involvement in the development of the Action Plans and actually while some had a vague knowledge of the process and plans, most people (including within the public sector) were not aware of the Open Government Partnership or the Action Plans.

Awareness of the first Irish Action Plan was slightly higher than awareness of the second UK Action Plan, although there were marginally more people suggesting they had been a little involved in the drafting of the second UK Action Plan. That was, however, still relatively low at 4%.

No one replying thought they had been very involved in the design of either the UK or Irish Open Government Partnership Action Plans.



Importance of UK Action Plan Commitments for Northern Ireland

The UK Action Plan makes a number of commitments under various themes - Open Data, Government Integrity, Fiscal Transparency and Empowering Citizens.

Response options provided included critically important for Northern Ireland, fairly important, not at all important and finally don't understand or/and are not familiar.

Open Data

The UK Action Plan makes a number of commitments under the theme of Open Data.

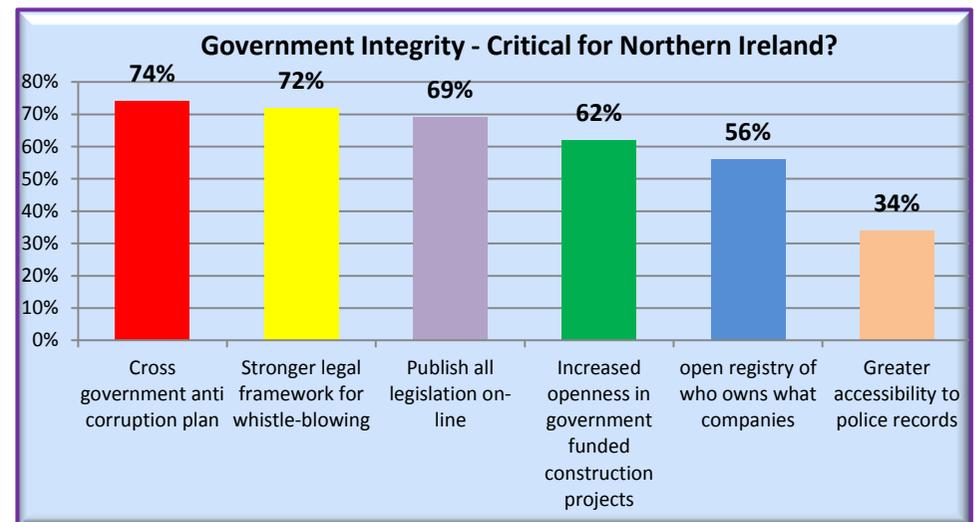
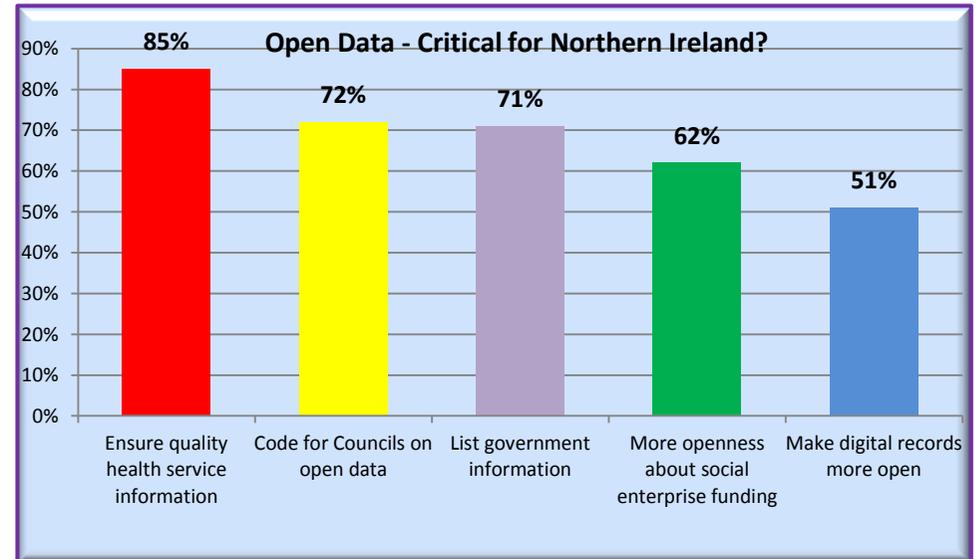
The respondents to the survey thought certain aspects were particularly critical for Northern Ireland, such as ensuring quality health care information (85% thought it critical), open data in local government (72%) and listing an inventory of the government's own datasets (71%).

Fewer than 5% in each category thought the issues were not at all important. Fewer than 5% said they did not understand or were not familiar with the topic.

Government Integrity

The UK Action Plan makes a number of commitments under the theme of Government Integrity. Those government integrity issues identified in the UK plan that were considered particularly critical for Northern Ireland included having a cross-government anti-corruption plan (74%), stronger legal

framework to support workers speaking up about wrong-doing (72%) and the publication of all legislation on-line (69%).



Just over a third of respondents thought greater accessibility to police records was critically important (34%), the lowest for any of the 21 UK Action Plan commitments. Nearly one in ten (9%) thought greater accessibility to police records was not at all important.

Fiscal Transparency and Natural Resource Transparency

The UK Action Plan makes a number of commitments under the theme of Fiscal Transparency.

The critical need for more openness in procurement by the government was supported by 80%, the highest of all respondents on the 21 Action Plan commitments. Also, around two thirds of people (65%) considered greater transparency and accountability for extractive industries was critically important. Fewer than half (48%) thought openness in international aid was critically important.

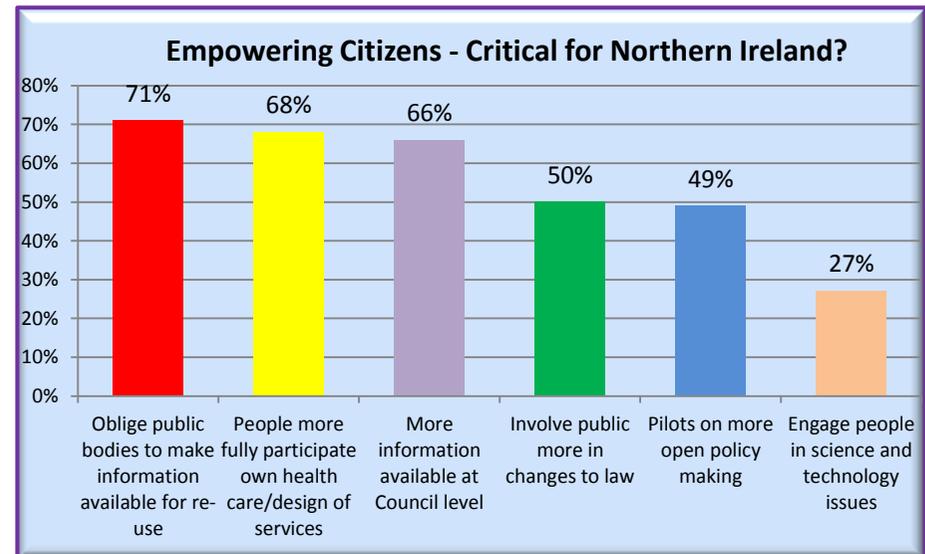
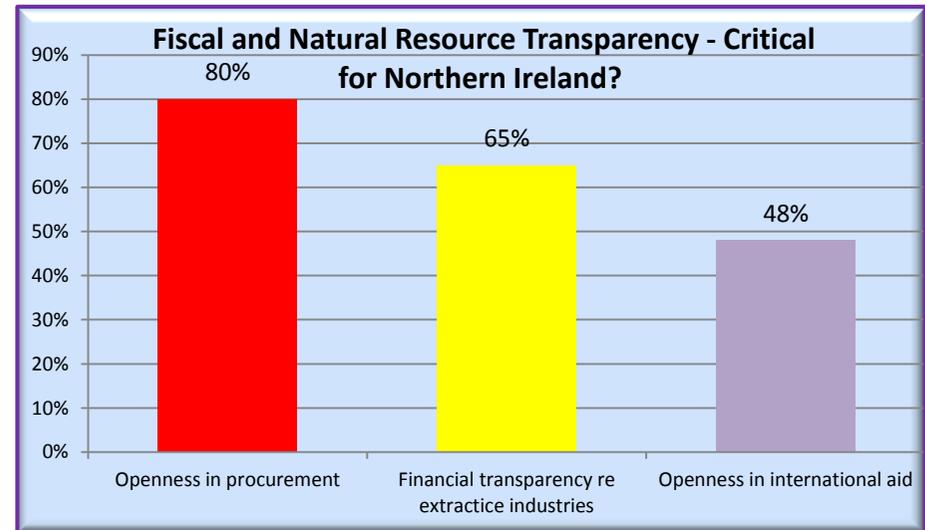
Empowering Citizens

The UK Action Plan makes a number of commitments under the theme of Empowering Citizens. Making information available for re-use (71%) and at a Council or local government level (66%) were considered amongst the most critical.

In addition, respondents thought the need for fuller citizen participation in health provision and in the development of services was considered critical by a significant number (68%).

Involvement in complex science and technology issues was considered not at all important by 10% of those replying.

Around half of those responding believed greater involvement in changing the law, and pilots on open policy making were critically important.



OGP Eligibility Criteria and Grand Challenges

The Open Government Partnership has over 60 member countries, each of which has to meet four eligibility criteria. They are considered relatively straightforward conditions of entry and member countries are then encouraged to become better in each of the criteria.

The eligibility criteria are:

1. Fiscal transparency;
2. Access to information;
3. Disclosure related to elected or senior public officials;
4. Citizen engagement.

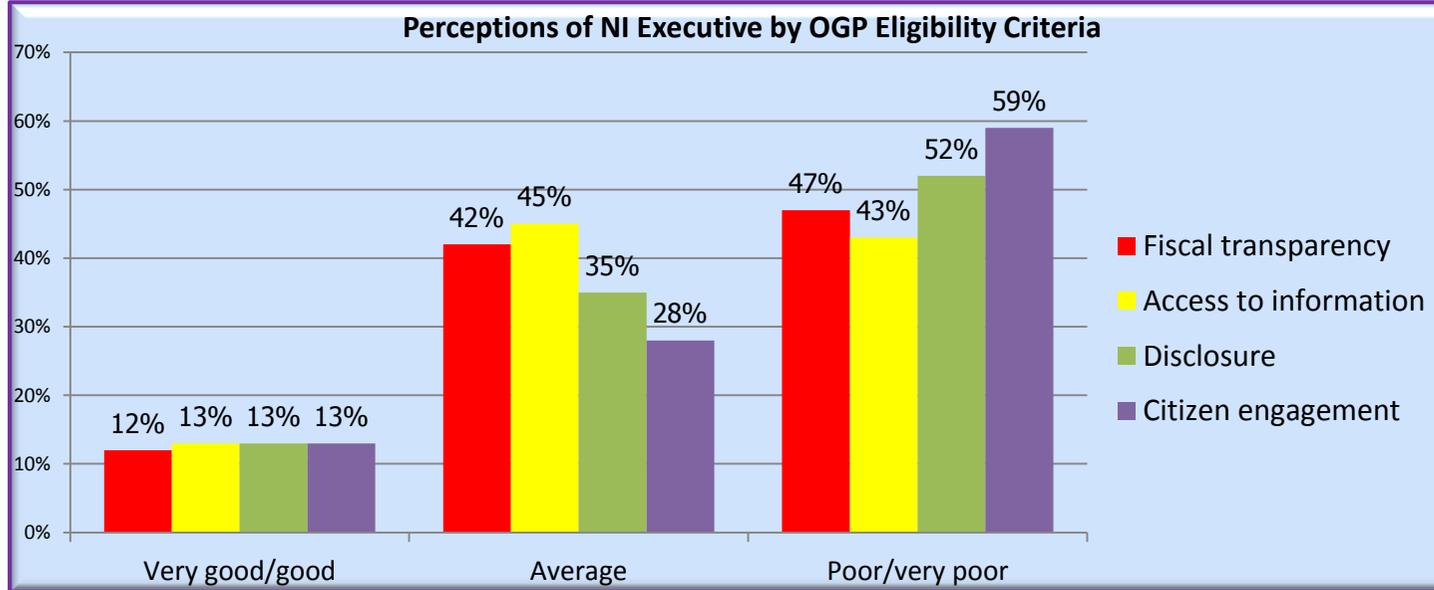
In the Action Plan produced by each country they are asked to address five grand challenges. They are:

1. Improving public services;
2. Increasing public integrity;
3. More effectively engaging public resources;
4. Creating safer communities;
5. Increasing corporate accountability.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the Northern Ireland Executive according to the OGP membership eligibility criteria and the five grand challenges that should be addressed in any Action Plan commitments.

Northern Ireland Executive and Eligibility Criteria

The Northern Ireland Executive is rated more poor/very poor than good/very good in each of the four criteria.



It scores particularly poorly in citizen engagement and disclosure of senior elected or public officials.

For both citizen engagement (59%) and disclosure (52%) over half of those replying believe the Northern Ireland Executive is very poor or poor.

Northern Ireland Executive and OGP Grand Challenges

The five OGP grand challenges are those that the specific Action Plan commitments seek to address. They may, therefore, help in creating a barometer of where any specific Northern Ireland Action Plan may prioritise.

The survey again reflects a poor/very poor rating for the Northern Ireland Executive on each of the grand challenge measures, although less striking than the ratings for the eligibility criteria.

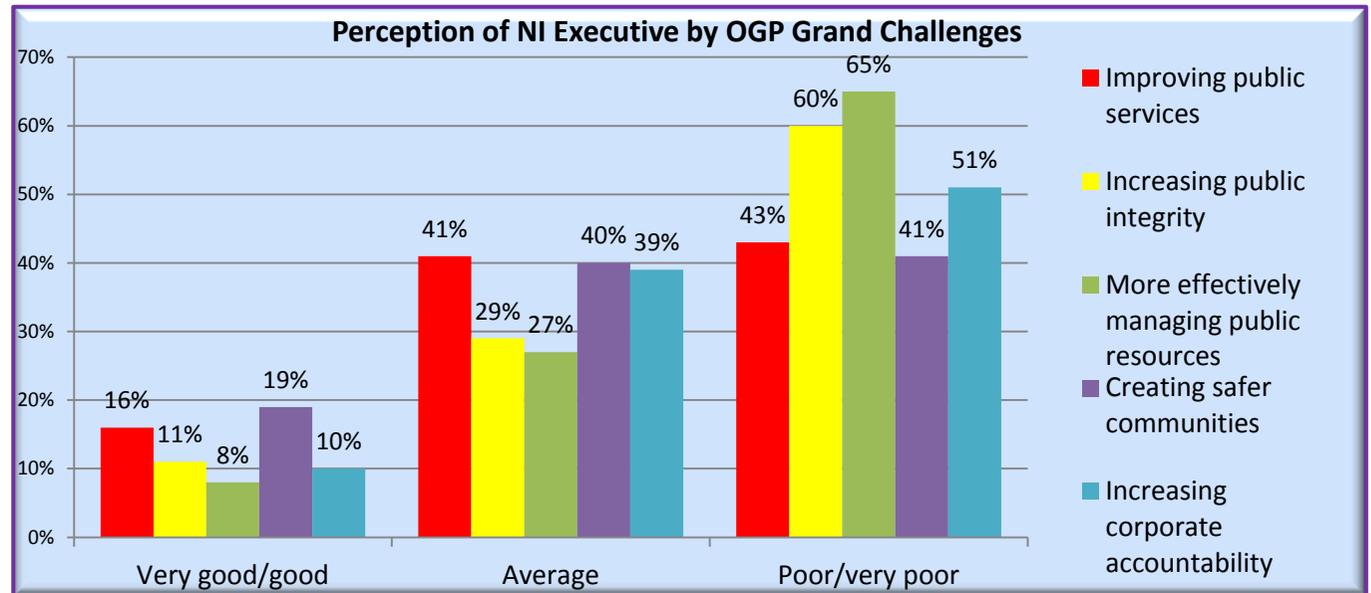
The grand challenge measurements are especially negative for two of the challenges in particular - more effectively managing public resources where 64% rate the Northern Ireland Executive as poor/very poor, and increasing public integrity where 60% rate it poor/very poor.

The ratings were also very negative for increasing corporate accountability with just over half of those replying (51%) believing the Northern Ireland Executive to be poor/very poor.

While 19% rate the Northern Ireland Executive very good/good for creating safer communities, 41% rate it poor/very poor for the same criteria.

The table opposite summarises the positive/negative rating for perceptions of NI Executive performance against all OGP criteria and grand challenges.

OGP Criteria for Membership	Positive/Negative Rating of NI Executive performance <small>(Very good/good score minus very poor/poor score)</small>
Citizen engagement	- 46
Disclosure	- 39
Fiscal transparency	- 35
Access to information	- 30
OGP Grand Challenges	
More effectively managing public resources	- 57
Increasing public integrity	- 49
Increasing corporate accountability	- 41
Improving public services	- 27
Creating safer communities	- 22



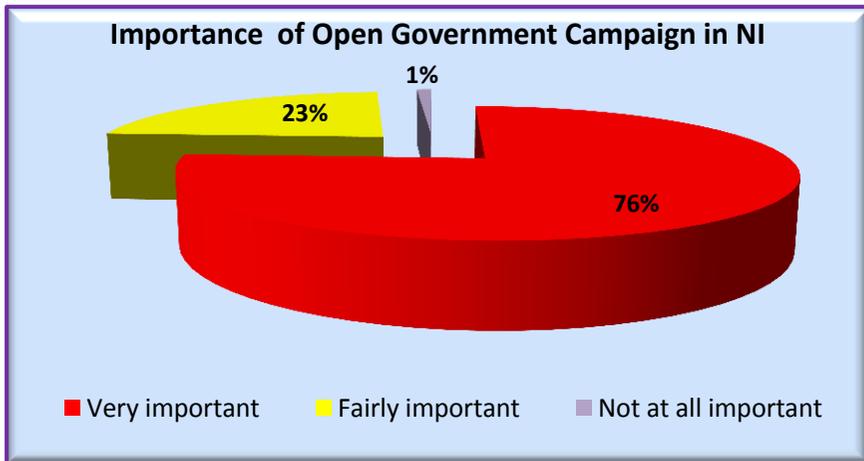
Importance and Interest in Open Government Campaign and Network

The survey results demonstrate considerable interest in participating in an open government network which is of little surprise given the importance of an open government campaign in Northern Ireland according to those who replied to the survey.

Over three people in four (76%) believe an open government campaign in Northern Ireland is very important, with just 1% believing it not at all important.

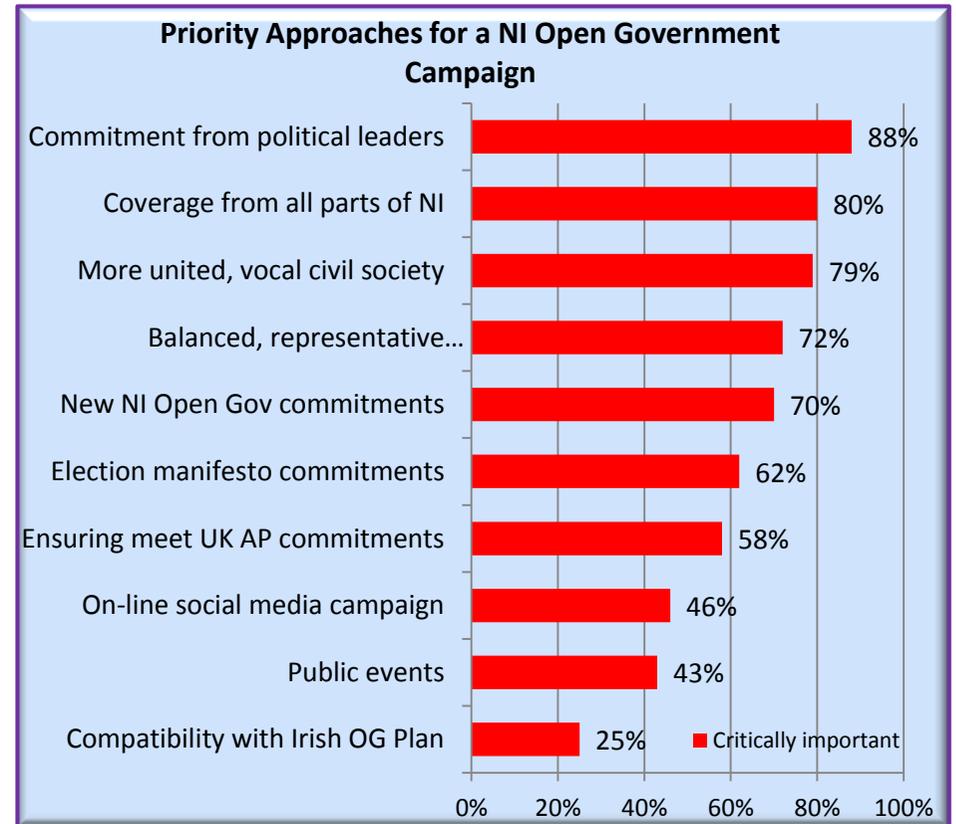
Many of those replying (57%) would be interested in participating in an open government campaign in Northern Ireland.

When asked to prioritise the nature of any future open government campaign in Northern Ireland, the survey respondents suggested a significant focus on commitment from political leaders (88%), coverage and participation from all parts of Northern Ireland (80%), a more united and vocal civic society (79%), balanced involvement (72%), and identifying specific Northern Ireland open government commitments (70%).



The belief that new specific Northern Ireland commitments were critically important (70%) rated much higher than ensuring compatibility with the Irish Open Government Action Plan (25%) or that the UK Action Plan commitments were met in Northern Ireland (58%).

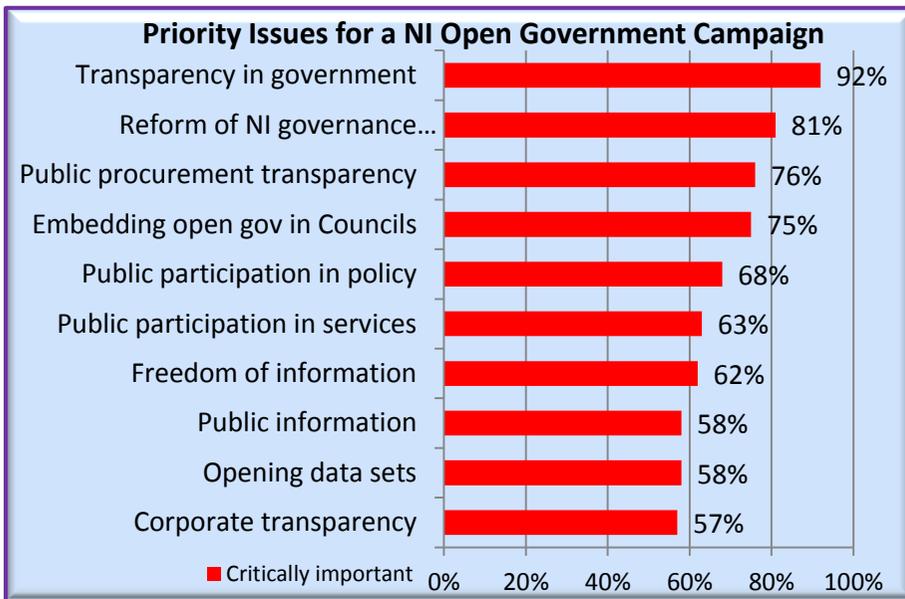
While gaining political commitment (88%) was the highest rated, the need for commitments in manifestos at the next Assembly elections was also viewed as critically important (62%).



The issues that respondents believed were important for a new open government campaign in Northern Ireland to focus on include the importance of transparency in government (92%) , reform of governance arrangements (81%), transparency in procurement (76%), and embedding an open government approach in the new local Councils (75%). The fact that Council arrangements scored so highly perhaps reflects the importance given to the new Super Council arrangements and the potential impact of their work on the VCSE sector.

Public participation in policy processes and in service delivery also scored highly, with around two thirds of people believing both were critically important. Opening government data sets was considered critically important by just over half of those replying (58%).

However, the survey clearly identifies transparency and reform of the Northern Ireland government as those issues considered most critical for a new open government campaign in Northern Ireland.



Overview of Key Issues:

- ✚ There is clear and significant support for an open government campaign in Northern Ireland;
- ✚ Transparency in government and reform of government as the critical issues for any new open government campaign in Northern Ireland;
- ✚ A united and vocal civil society voice is wanted and considered an important aspect of any new open government campaign in Northern Ireland, it should include balanced and representative coverage from all parts of Northern Ireland;
- ✚ Commitment from political leaders, including within Assembly election manifestos, is a priority for the success of a new open government campaign;
- ✚ The performance of government in Northern Ireland is considered much more poor than good with regard to the Open Government Partnership eligibility criteria, grand challenges and criteria;
- ✚ There was little awareness of either the UK or Irish open Government Partnership Action Plans and even less involvement in the processes;
- ✚ Critical issues for Northern Ireland within the existing UK Open Government Action Plan include participation and information provision in services especially within the health sector, openness in procurement and how government does business, anti-corruption efforts, openness within local government, government generally making information available for re-use, and greater transparency in the extractive industries.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A number of interviews were carried out across the VCSE, public and private sectors, as well as with a number of MLAs.

The interviews focussed on awareness and involvement with the Open Government Partnership initiative, experience of open government in Northern Ireland, aspects of any potential open government campaign, and potential identification of good or poor practice.

Overall, 25 interviews were carried out⁶. Feedback from those interviews is provided below within the themes of:

- ✚ Awareness and involvement with the UK or Irish Action Plans;
- ✚ Experience of open government in Northern Ireland;
- ✚ Potential for Open Government in Northern Ireland’
- ✚ Priorities for an open Government campaign in Northern Ireland;
- ✚ Potential collaboration with the UK and Irish Open Government Action Plans;
- ✚ Other comments.

Awareness and Involvement with the Open Government Action Plans in the UK and Ireland

Most interviewees had no awareness of the Open Government Partnership or the UK or Irish Open Government Partnership Action Plans.

Where there was awareness of the action plans it tended to be from representatives from the VCSE sector where there had already been some interest, or that may have attended the Building Change Trust open

⁶ List of those interviewed is included as Appendix Three

government events, or from some civil servants such as the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP).

The Open Government Partnership was seen by those who had knowledge of it as a mechanism to facilitate a stronger democratic process through civil society talking, sharing and being involved in aspects of government.

Those more closely involved in both the UK and Irish Open Government Partnership Action Plans, saw them as long-term processes for planning and collaboration between government and civil society. For some, the Action Plan provided a useful tool to have in one place tools for monitoring government commitments such as Freedom of Information and whistleblowing.

Queen’s University of Belfast representatives made an offer to usage of their facilities and expertise to promote the concept, and increase understanding, of open government through workshops and seminars.

Experience of Open Government in Northern Ireland

There was some awareness that open government in Northern Ireland had progressed over many years and that processes such as Freedom of Information and whistleblowing legislation have led to more openness currently than in previous decades.

However, none of the interviewees could immediately identify specific examples of good practice in open government in Northern Ireland. One interviewee did highlight the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Assembly education and community engagement teams, and that the Northern Ireland Assembly itself was relatively open.

Experience of procurement processes caused a number of interviewees concerns, believing that processes were not as transparent as they could be and favoured larger organisations.

While important for the VCSE sector, procurement and open government was relatively below the radar of many VCSE organisations.

There was a substantial degree of frustration with leadership and with engagement between political leaders and civil society organisations. Public consultation from government was regarded as being tokenistic demonstrating government's preference for shallow relationships with civil society rather than a more meaningful and longer term relationship that allowed civil society to influence the design of policy and services.

Most interviewees believed there to be a lack of co-ordination across government and between government departments.

Elected representatives, including Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), were not viewed as providing high levels of challenge or holding government to account.

Potential for Open Government in Northern Ireland

There was a near universal interest in the concept of open government and the potential for an Open Government Partnership-style initiative in Northern Ireland. However, most believed public bodies needed to understand the need for more openness, especially in releasing data, and to understand the economic and commercial value of greater openness. While improving, interviewees still believed there to be a tradition of secrecy within the civil service.

A lack of trust in government – political leadership and openness of government – is a phenomenon throughout many countries and not just the United Kingdom, Ireland or Northern Ireland. Trust in government generally was low, reflected in for example, reducing turn-out for elections over a prolonged period of time.

Understanding how the relationship works between government and civil society was an issue for capacity building for both sectors. The public sector needed to understand the benefits and relevance of civil society having a right to influence, while civil society needed to better understand the pressures and necessity for the public sector to manage service delivery and budget.

The DFP has expressed a commitment to better engage with the VCSE sector and civil society especially around what reform of the public sector looks like and identifying the responsibilities of citizens. They were exploring linking that work through the 2010 government-VCSE concordat and the Joint Forum.

As civil society organisations get more engaged with the Open Government Partnership in Northern Ireland and potentially establish an open government network, there would be a need for it to be co-ordinated and driven by a specific organisation or champion. While Building Change Trust has taken on that role in the short-term it does not see itself, given the nature of the organisation as a funder to the VCSE sector and a time-limited endowment, as being in a position to take on the role longer term.

The VCSE sector also needed to have realistic expectations of what could be achieved and understand that it is a long-term process. It needed to be both co-ordinated and strategic, and there was some caution that the sector needed to take some time itself to agree its own agenda and priorities.

Priorities for Open Government campaign in Northern Ireland

An Open Government campaign may help the VCSE discover or re-discover its strategic and democratic core, according to some interviewees. The campaign should therefore explore participative activities and events such as citizen assemblies, town hall meetings and advocating for a public petitioning system for Stormont. It may also review innovative practice from elsewhere including participatory budgeting or initiatives soon to be launched by Building Change Trust such as its Civic Activism Toolkit.

The campaign would need to recognise it will take some time to get established and identify “low hanging fruit” or “quick wins”, maybe in association with departments. This may include some of the DFP priorities such as innovation labs, social economy pilots and citizen engagement.

The campaign needed to itself understand the benefits of open government, and develop a programme for explaining it to wider society including others within the VCSE. This would include benefits for the VCSE sector and public sector of open government in doing business better and more effectively.

Potential Collaboration with the UK and Irish Action Plans

There had been little engagement between the development of both the UK and Irish Action Plans and people and civil society organisations in Northern Ireland.

Indeed, that is acknowledged in both jurisdictions, but both are keen to engage with Northern Ireland representatives now, as they start to explore the next Action Plan process. The Cabinet Office is keen that the planning for the next UK Action Plan is more representative of the United Kingdom as a whole.

There was some thought by interviewees that North-South collaboration would benefit from open government processes, especially in areas where compatible statistics and open data may benefit service delivery such as in health and education services. That may be an issue for North-South bodies to explore.

The Constitutional Convention in Ireland was regarded by some interviewees as an interesting initiative to scope for Northern Ireland.

Other Comments

Those that worked with the Cabinet Office in the UK believed the Office to be committed to open government and to be strong advocates for open government and for greater regional involvement.

However, other departments may be less strong advocates which may be a reason why, along with the complexities of the work, some Action Plan commitments are behind schedule.

The culture within government departments is therefore critically important in whether the open government concept works and whether there is genuine desire to engage with civil society organisations on a long-term and meaningful basis.

There continues to be a need to explain what open government is and how it may benefit government and civil society.

Civil society needed to find a mechanism to achieve early cohesion within itself which involved a readiness stage of capacity enhancement and planning.

Overview of Key Issues:

Key issues arising from the stakeholder engagement include:

- ✚ There is a need to increase the understanding of what is meant by open government and how it may benefit civil society, the general public and the more effective working of government departments;
- ✚ Political representatives lack awareness of open government, like other sectors, but are critical to its success including as those holding government to account and as drivers within departments;
- ✚ Utilising expertise such as offered by Queen’s University of Belfast may be a central part of initial outreach;
- ✚ There is considered to be a real lack of co-ordination across government departments, and sometimes within individual departments;
- ✚ Leadership within the political sector and within the VCSE sector is critical to the success of open government;
- ✚ There is a need to work with the VCSE in a preparatory period to increase its capacity and understanding, and enhance its cohesiveness as a sector on this issue before it seriously engages with government to influence a new set of Open Government Partnership commitments specific to Northern Ireland;
- ✚ The open government network needs co-ordinated and driven by an organisation or individual within the VCSE sector;
- ✚ There is considerable tokenism being felt by civil society organisations in the delivery of government consultation;
- ✚ The sector should be mindful of the role of the Joint Forum and ensure it is a timely and strong advocate of open government, as one vehicle among many others within the VCSE sector and civil society;
- ✚ Some within government, such as the DFP, appear open to engaging on the Open Government Partnership agenda and are seeking partners;
- ✚ The open government network, if one is established, needs to identify “low hanging fruit” that it may work with government to make impactful progress in the early stages;
- ✚ There is openness for greater engagement between civil society organisations in Northern Ireland and the Cabinet Office and Involvement in the United Kingdom and also with those preparing a second Open Government Partnership Action Plan for Ireland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding pages have clearly outlined some of the critical issues for open government, a future open government network and making Northern Ireland's contribution to future UK and Irish action plans more cohesive with a unique regional feel.

The recommendations below are summarised within four principle themes:

1. Open Government network;
2. Communication and development;
3. Northern Ireland-specific commitments;
4. Working within the UK and Irish Open Government Plans.

The key recommendations have been used to identify short-, medium- and long-term actions.

Given the timeframe anticipated for the work of an embryonic open government network some actions are more urgent than others. The potential actions need discussed by network participants, refined and expanded on. However, there is the potential for quite a significant work programme that needs substantial input to make it happen.

Open Government Network

- ✚ An open government network should be established with a specific driver and co-ordinator drawn from the VCSE sector. Currently that role is being played by Building Change Trust. Building Change Trust should continue to provide that lead until another driver is identified which agrees to fulfil the function;
- ✚ The network should develop a programme to continue to involve VCSE organisations in the development of an open government programme which includes awareness raising seminars and workshops, capacity building around open government, engagement with other sectors and elected representatives and exploring good practice. Some of these may be simple taster sessions to grow interest in, and support for, the network;
- ✚ The initial programme should be set to a 24-month timeline hoping to influence the Programme for Government that may be agreed by December 2016 (assuming Northern Ireland Assembly elections are held in May 2016). A draft timeline is included as an appendix⁷;
- ✚ The network should, as part of that programme, begin to develop a cohesive platform within the VCSE sector and civil society around what expectations and priorities are for open government activity with the public sector and government;
- ✚ The co-ordinator of the network needs to ensure involvement in it balances all parts of society and geographic areas, and includes both those with an interest in technology, in citizen engagement and other aspects of open government;

⁷ Appendix One – draft timeline

- ✚ The network should target Assembly election manifesto commitments from the main political parties in Northern Ireland, assuming Assembly elections will still be held in May 2016. In doing so the network should be mindful of the third UK Action Plan that will emerge in mid to late 2015 as the next potential significant date for inclusion of specific ideas;
- ✚ These commitments should then be targeted as potential inclusions in a new Programme for Government which, if elections are held in May 2016, will be due by the year end;
- ✚ There is a need to further engage minority or less vocal groupings in the conversation including young people and BME communities;
- ✚ The activities of the network also should take cognisance of those older people within the sector that are less comfortable with online communication;
- ✚ The network should liaise with the Joint Forum, operating as a result of the Concordat signed by all government departments and the main VCSE organisations in Northern Ireland, as one vehicle for engagement with government especially DFP;

Communication and Development

- ✚ The network should establish a comprehensive database of people from all sectors interested in participating in the network and start regular communication with those interested people. This may be by e-mail but the network should explore more inter-active digital engagement to complement invitations to outreach programme and capacity building activities (above). This may include a web site or web page, blogs, Twitter account, Facebook page;

- ✚ Drivers and champions within all sectors are considered essential to the experience in the UK and Ireland to date. The network should use its programme to help build understanding around the benefits of open government with key people from all sectors.
- ✚ The network should also identify some political champions from all political parties and within government;
- ✚ Politicians in Northern Ireland continue to work a system of devolution that has helped re-establish devolved government in Northern Ireland after many years of inter-community conflict. It may take many more years for political life to normalise around policy making, service provision and accountability. The network should develop a specific seminar for delivery with elected representatives of the Assembly and Councils, outlining the benefits of open government, accountability as a valuable process between elections, and how better citizen engagement benefits them and service provision;

Northern Ireland-specific Commitments

- ✚ The network should explore a formal relationship with the DFP to help it meet objectives in relation to open data, innovation, partnerships and collaboration;
- ✚ The network should explore the potential for “quick wins” in its relationship with government including the DFP reform agenda, potential technology labs, engagement with the VCSE sector, social impact bonds, and procurement with an emphasis on social economy organisations;
- ✚ There is an interest in health as a policy area suitable for open government and increasing transparency and user involvement that may include social care ratings, use of websites, social interest groups and

more mature discussions between civil society organisations and politicians on issues such as prescription charges;

- ✚ Pilot projects could be identified to develop understanding and possibly pilot usage of the availability of data sets;
- ✚ The network should liaise with the DFP to ensure participation by network members in the Public Sector Innovation Laboratories especially those relating to procurement, the social economy, and big data. It may also usefully be involved in the “16x16” initiative and SpatialNI.

- ✚ The involvement of the border counties could lead to co-operation in areas where shared information could help citizens on either side of the border such as health and education service provision, possibly including North-South bodies;

- ✚ The network should explore with the Cabinet Office, DFP and the DPER⁸ how it may assist in the recently announced commitments by the Irish open government partnership to collaborate with colleagues in Northern Ireland on open data and share good practice, knowledge and expertise.

Working with the UK and Irish Plans

- ✚ The network should develop closer relations with Involve (UK) and seek to have input to the third UK Action Plan, due for publication in 2015, with both a focus on Northern Ireland-specific activities but also enhancing the regional involvement in the delivery of UK-wide commitments;
- ✚ There is also much commonality with the Irish Open Government Partnership process, and many issues that may benefit from reflection and availability of data in the counties on the border, such as health and education provision. The network should seek to work closely with the Irish Open Government Partnership, including organisations such as the Wheel, TASC and the Open Knowledge Foundation;
- ✚ The UK and Irish practitioners should be invited to events in the network programme, and would be useful speakers at some of those events. Speakers from Northern Ireland would also be useful at events in the rest of the UK and Ireland;

⁸ Irish Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the lead department on OGP within the Irish Government

APPENDIX ONE: DRAFT TIMELINE

November 2014 – December 2016

November 2014 – June 2015	
No.	Activity
1	Agree co-ordinating organisation
2	Create developing database and inter-active media
3	Adopt programme until December 2016
4	Build UK and Irish links
5	Deliver taster sessions
6	Develop elected representatives workshop
7	Start dialogue with VCSE around priorities and themes
8	Engage with Joint Forum
9	Identify political champions
July 2015 – December 2015	
1	Agree broad priorities and themes for Open Government within the VCSE
2	Deliver elected representatives workshops in Council areas/Assembly
3	Dialogue with political parties around election manifestos
4	Clarify actions with Joint Forum or other body representing the sector
5	Deliver substance of outreach programme
6	Work with Involve re the UK Action Plan and counterparts in Ireland re the Irish Action Plan
January 2016 – May 2016	
1	Lobby and campaign for inclusion of Open Government commitments in election manifestos
2	Organise open government hustings events
3	Continue the programme of outreach and building the network
4	Continue to engage with colleagues in UK and Ireland
June 2016 – December 2016	
1	Lobby with new Northern Ireland Executive for inclusion in the Programme for Government
2	Continue the programme of outreach and building the network
3	Continue to engage with colleagues in UK and Ireland

APPENDIX TWO: OVERVIEW OF UK OGP COMMITMENTS

Overview of UK OGP Action Plan Commitments 2013-2015

No.	Commitment
1	Inventory of assets for National Information Infrastructure to prioritise the release of datasets
2	NHS England – online space to share experiences re quality standards. Potential accredited scheme for citizens and organisations to assess progress
3	Revision of Local Authorities Data Transparency Code – more power to citizens hands to contribute to decision making processes.
4	UK aims for most transparent social investment market in the OGP and G20
5	Comprehensive and accessible paper and digital record of UK government available to citizens
6	UK Government will bring together all UK anti-corruption efforts under one cross-government and anti-corruption plan
7	Publicly accessible registry of company beneficial ownership information about who owns and controls UK companies
8	Working group to ensure greater transparency and accessibility to police records in England and Wales
9	Transparency and accountability in all government-funded construction projects, domestic and international arenas
10	Make legislative data available in open, accessible format for re-use under the UK's Open Government Licence
11	Strong legislative framework for workers to speak up about wrongdoing without fear of reprisal
12	Enhance the scope, breadth and usability of published contractual data to increase transparency in procurement
13	Scottish government endorses open contracting and will improve its transparency in procurement practices
14	Transform the transparency of global development assistance by publishing information on the ODA in line with IATI Standard to track delivery chain
15	NHS England – improve quality and breadth of information available to citizens so that more fully involved in own health care and design of services
16	Five test and demonstration projects across different policy areas to open up policy making
17	Engage public around complex scientific and technological innovation – Sciencewise
18	Publish legislation in draft format on Gov.Uk to enable public engagement in proposed changes to the law
19	OpenDataCommunities programme to free up Dept. Communities and LG evidence-base so that it can be discovered and re-used by third parties
20	Transpose to UK law and implement EU legislation on the re-use of public sector information early
21	Implement a global standard of financial transparency and accountability in the extractive industries

APPENDIX THREE: INTERVIEWEES

Name	Organisation
Agnew, Steven	MLA
Barry, John	QUB
Braithwaite, Paul	Building Change Trust
Browne, Nicola	People, Participation, Rights
Clifford, Kate	Rural Community Network
Colgan, Anne	Co-Chair, OGP Ireland
Embryonic Open Government Network meetings (3)	Various
Gordon, Sylvia	Groundwork
Grimes, Sinead	Belfast City Council
Hughes, Tim	Involve UK
Joint Forum – Concordat	Various
Kilmurray, Avila	VCSE sector
Kinahan, Danny	MLA
Lyster, Lizetta	Cabinet Office
Lyttle, Chris	MLA
MacCarthaigh, Muiris	QUB
Mathews, Chris	Department of Health
McAfee, Rachel	Department of Finance and Personnel
McCaffery, Steven	The Detail.tv
McCallan, Derek	NILGA
O'Connor, Jack	Department of Social Development
O'Connor, Nat	TASC Ireland
Semple, Kathryn	Department of Finance and Personnel
Smyth, Nora	CO3
Smyth, Paul	Public Achievement
von Barteles, Kitty	Cabinet Office



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The Building Change Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund with a National Lottery grant of £10 million as an investment for community capacity building and the promotion of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. The Building Change Trust is registered as a company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland (NI0711812) and is registered as a charity for tax purposes with the Inland Revenue (XT11390)