



**'The Review of Public Administration and Health – Opportunities & Challenges for the Community & Voluntary Sector'**

## ***Conference Report***

**The conference was organised by the Belfast Community Development Health Forum 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

## **Introduction**

In December 2006 a group of interested community representatives from South & East and North & West Belfast who work in the field of community development and health met to discuss common issues around Health and the Review of Public Administration and the proposed new commissioning arrangements. In order to address some of these issues the group formed the Belfast Community Development Health Forum.

There has been much uncertainty in the community and voluntary sector about the opportunities and challenges that may be presented as a result of the new arrangements. The Belfast Community Development Health Forum over the past four months has had several meetings with key representatives from the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Department of Health & Social Services & Public Safety, delivering four key messages:

- There should be a clearly defined community development structure in the new Belfast Trust, the Local Commissioning Group and the Community Commissioning Associations.
- There should be clear guidelines on how communities are to be engaged or be involved in the decision making processes.
- Communication lines with the community and voluntary sector throughout Belfast about the outworking of the new arrangements and their potential impact should be open and transparent.

- Community health projects currently funded through the HSS Trusts and Boards should have confirmation that they will continue to do so.

**Organisations who have been involved to date:**

Ardoyne/Shankill Healthy Living Centre

Ballybeen Women's centre

Carew II Family & Training Centre

Clanmore Sure Start

Coda Project

Coiste

East Belfast Community Development Agency

Engage with Age – East Belfast & Castlereagh

Falls Community Council

Heart Project – Maureen Sheehan Centre

Inner East Belfast Sure Start

Inner South Belfast Sure Start

Lenadoon Community Forum

North Belfast Partnership Board

Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network

Oasis – Caring in Action

Shankill Women's Centre

Short Strand Community Forum

South Belfast Highway to Health

West Belfast Partnership Board

Windsor Women's Centre

Opening the conference, Stiofan Long from the Belfast Community Development Health Forum outlined the work of the Forum to date. The concerns of the community sector were along the lobbying strategy developed by BCDHF. Stiofan went on to describe the connections that BCDHF had made and the effect of its lobby on shaping the emerging structures, which were also summarized.

Chief Executive of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust William McKee gave a positive address to the conference in which he explained the size of the new Trust, how it was structured and the enormity of the anticipated change. He further committed the BHSCT to continuing to support the community sector in tackling health inequalities and improving health & well-being. Significantly the Chief Executive announced that the Trust would advance a community development, health improvement and user engagement strategy.

Michelle O'Neill Vice-Chairperson of the Assembly Health Scrutiny Committee spoke of her committee's determination to ensuring that the community and voluntary sectors continued to play an integral part in the planning and delivery of health & social care services. She assured participants, that even though the Committee was relatively new, it recognised the importance of the subject at hand and the Vice –Chairperson encouraged the conference participants to utilise the Health Committee as a resource for raising their concerns and suggested they address the Committee on this important issue.

Workshop one was held following a presentation by Stiofan Long, in which he gave a synopsis of the challenges and opportunities identified by the Belfast Community Development and Health Forum. William Mc Kee, Chief Executive of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, gave an analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the new Trust and how it would move forward working with the community & voluntary sectors.

### **Workshop one question 1**

*List the challenges facing the community and voluntary sectors presented by the Review of Public Administration.*

- How do we maintain & enhance current services provided by the community?
- Will the acute sector vacuum up all resources to the detriment of “soft services”?
- How will commissioning work in the future, are services provided by the community sector at risk?
- Professional boundaries need to be broken down to ensure co-operation at grass roots level.
- There appears to be little space for community or voluntary sectors in the Community Commissioning Associations or Local Commissioning Groups, will this mark a return to the medical model of health?
- The community & Voluntary Sectors need to be involved in the change management process; communication is paramount especially to the smaller organisations
- The role the Community sector plays in tackling health inequalities should be recognised and valued.

*Review of Public Administration, Health & Community Development Conference – June 2007*

- New relationships need to be built.
- There needs to be increased co-operation between Health & Education especially in relation to early year's services.
- How will equity of service provision be achieved in the new BHSCCT area, too large scale?
- How does this relate to Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Planning etc?

**Workshop one question 2**

*List three opportunities open to the community & voluntary Sectors presented by the Review of Public Administration (RPA)*

- Community Development approaches to health can be seen as the best model to tackle health inequalities and address the wider determinants of health.
- Community Development approaches to health can become ingrained at every level of the new Trust.
- RPA opens up the space for collective initiatives between Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCCT) and community sector and importantly, for Belfast wide working, the breaking down of barriers (no more working in isolation)
- Actually engaging the community and public will in itself be an opportunity to improve communication and break down old barriers.
- RPA provides an opportunity to include those hard to reach groups and those traditionally excluded by the system.

- Ensuring Community Development is embedded into the BHSCT psyche through the Community Development, User Engagement and Health Improvement strategy.
- This represents an opportunity to work together towards the common goals of reducing health inequalities and improving health & wellbeing.
- Coupled with the Community Development Strategy is the need for increased social economy projects with community sector becoming the provider of a wide range of services.

### **Workshop two question 1**

*In what ways could the emerging structures ensure that there is an effective community development and engagement strategy?*

- Provide interim support for capacity building in the community sector.
- Assess resources including finances implications.
- Move towards long term commissioning and stop bend and spend culture.
- Openly communicate to tackle the lack of trust and repair poor relationships.
- Improve Co-ordination- between statutory agencies not just with Voluntary & community Sectors but also between statutory organisations.
- Clarify who represents community sector and their accountability mechanisms.
- Move from treatment to prevention. GP's need to be more holistic and participate in community development approaches.

- Work towards providing equal services that are locality sensitive.
- Involve small organizations not just big community & voluntary organisations.
- Take into account community priorities such as mental health and the early years sectors.

**Workshop two question 2**

*In what ways would you like to see Belfast Community Development & Health Forum moving forward?*

- Using community development as an effective way of tackling inequality and health improvement.
- Engagement with community including any those socially excluded
- Opportunities to improve care in the community/ localised health and support.
- Build on existing good practice and have this reflected in strategy. For example, Belfast Healthy Cities, Health Action Zone.
- Reduce formality.
- Address professional boundaries.
- Build capacity in community sector for joint working.
- Across Belfast working/sharing ideas and practice delivery
- BCDHF- potential to co-ordinate this.
- Wider representation on community voluntary sector
- Better use of resources
- Effective timeframe

- Tackle pockets of poverty
- Identify who is responsible for what in the strategy
- Need to buy in from other bodies
- Community planning

### **Recommendations**

There was a general consensus that the work of Belfast Community Development Health Forum, to date, had been worthwhile and this was validated by the conference feedback. It was agreed that there was a role for the Forum to continue to lobby and advocate on behalf of the community sector across Belfast. It was recommended that the Forum should also look for wider representation from across Belfast and update its strategy given the advances made and the new opportunities presented by the changing political landscape.

### ***Communication***

- There is a need for improved communication between Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Community and Voluntary Sectors.
- Belfast Community Development & Health Forum could be used to build upon existing mechanisms.

### ***Co-ordination***

*Review of Public Administration, Health & Community Development Conference – June 2007*

- Belfast Community Development & Health Forum could be used as a vehicle to co-ordinate between the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the community sector, alongside existing bodies such as Wellnet, Healthy Cities and the Health Action Zone.
- There is a need for capacity building in the community sector to meet the challenges presented by the Review of Public Administration especially joint working across Belfast.

***Community Development, User Engagement and Health Improvement Strategy***

The recommendations drawn from the conference in relation to the Community Development, User Engagement and Health Improvement Strategy were that it should:

- Underpin the value of community development approaches to tackling health inequalities and health improvement and ingrain it at all operational levels
- Seek to improve community services through joint working, cooperation and maximising resources.
- Maximise community involvement in the planning and delivery of services.
- Optimise the transparency of the decision making processes.

**Aim 1 - A community development structure in Belfast Trust, Local Commissioning Group and Community Commissioning Associations**

**Activities, achievements, set-backs, progress:**

- Work with BHSC Trust - Advisory and Planning Group (for user and community development strategy)
- Attempt to highlight community participation in CCA's - medical/clinical criteria.
- How can Group effectively lobby to ensure Community Development is represented at the top and with funding to support it?

**Aim 2 - Clear guidelines on community engagement or involvement in decision-making processes**

**Activities, achievements, set-backs, progress:**

- Representation on Steering Group established by Belfast Trust.
  - Not tokenistic representation.
  - Work on guidelines happening - and more work needed.
  - On the agenda for various organisations - when wouldn't have been before.
  - Setback - new Trust structure means people are in new roles and contacts have been lost.
  - Most progress on engagement but need more clarity on decision-making
  - Need earlier involvement in decision-making process at strategic level.

**Aim 3 - Communication Lines with the Community Sector throughout Belfast about the outworking of the new arrangements**

**Activities, achievements, set-backs, progress:**

- Meetings held with senior people in the new structures ie Trust and Department about open and transparent communication.
- Meeting held with LCG Chair - George O'Neill.
- No official mandate for the Forum yet.

- No sense of urgency!!
- Increasing buy-in to the Forum from the community sector.
- Need to create/strengthen link between grass roots organisation and the Forum.
- What are the statutory organisations doing to sustain communication?

**Aim 4 - Continuation of funding for community health projects funded through the Health and Social Services Trusts**

**Activities, achievements, set-backs, progress:**

- Letter from permanent secretary to Trust on need to continue support of community projects.
- A lot of uncertainty as to where funding will come from i.e. health projects receiving money from various departments.
- Equity with all areas re funding.

Evaluation Feedback:

Member of a Community Group	12
Member of a Voluntary Organisation	5
Community Volunteer	2
Paid Community Worker	12
Working in a Statutory Agency	7
Other...please state	1

*Review of Public Administration, Health & Community Development Conference – June 2007*

	<b>1/Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2/Disagree</b>	<b>3/Agree</b>	<b>4/Strongly Agree</b>
<b>I enjoyed the conference</b>		5	29	
<b>The keynote speakers were interesting and enjoyable</b>		5	23	12
<b>I feel better informed about the review of public administration and how it may impact on the work that I do</b>	2	5	24	7
<b>The question and answer panel discussion was interesting and enjoyable</b>	1	3	16	21
<b>The conference programme was the right balance of talks, discussion and activities</b>		2	19	16
<b>The conference was well organised</b>			13	27
<b>The workshop sessions were interesting and enjoyable</b>		2	24	13
<b>The conference will help me with my work</b>	1	6	21	7

**What Aspects of the conference did you find:**

**Most valuable?**

- Food/Panel
- William McKee's talk
- Workshops – good – would have been better if tables were more mixed
- Gaining momentum to place Community Development approaches to health in public health policy and strategy
- Workshops
- Question and answer panel
- Opportunity to network
- Informal networking and meeting people from across Belfast
- Good cross-section of delegates represented on the day
- Getting my comments across and being heard
- The opinion of my colleagues at the workshops

**Least valuable?**

- To long reporting back
- Question and answer panel session had too many at the table
- Presentations on RPA
- Maybe another speaker after lunch – the time for questioning was too long
- Would have liked more background information on Belfast Community Development Forum
- Workshops quite drawn out

**Other Comments:**

- Communication links are essential, however it needs to be emphasised that the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust's period of transition is unsettling for the 24,000 staff and just while the process may seem slow, the end goal will be worth waiting for in terms of community development, health improvement and user engagement,.
- Thought the panel was well constructed, balanced and attempted to answer honestly. I got the impression they listened. Hopefully they will act.
- How does 'forum' fit into Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships – is it going to be another strain on time?
- Very useful but be mindful of two things:
  - (i) Keep focus on structures without losing sight of policy/lobbying i.e. go straight to department/minister.
  - (ii) Develop Belfast work but ensure regional links are kept.