

# THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES' VOLUNTARY SECTOR SCHEME

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### The Statutory position

1.1 This Scheme is made under Section 114 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 which requires the National Assembly to make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary sector organisations as follows:

*“114 – (1) The National Assembly shall make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary organisations.*

*(2) In this section “relevant voluntary organisations” means bodies (other than local authorities or other public bodies) whose activities –*  
*(a) are carried on otherwise than for profit, and*  
*(b) directly or indirectly benefit the whole or any part of Wales (whether or not they also benefit any other area)*

*(3) In determining the provision to be included in the Scheme the National Assembly shall consider how it intends to exercise such of its functions as relate to matters affecting, or of concern to, relevant voluntary organisations.*

*(4) The Scheme shall specify –*

*(a) how the Assembly Government proposes to provide assistance to relevant voluntary organisations (whether by grants, loans, guarantees or by other means),*

*(b) how the Assembly Government proposes to monitor the use made of any assistance provided by it to relevant voluntary organisations, and*

*(c) how the Assembly Government proposes to consult relevant organisations about the exercise of such of its functions as relate to matters affecting, or of concern to, such organisations.*

*(5) The National Assembly shall keep the scheme under review and in the year following each ordinary election (after the first) shall consider whether it should be remade or revised.*

*(6) The National Assembly may not delegate the function of making, or remaking or revising, the scheme.*

*(7) The National Assembly shall publish the scheme when first made and whenever subsequently remade and, if the scheme is revised without being remade, shall publish either the revisions or the scheme as revised (as it considers appropriate).*

*(8) The National Assembly shall consult such relevant voluntary organisations as it considers appropriate before making, remaking or revising the scheme.*

*(9) After each financial year the National Assembly shall publish a report of how its proposals as set out in the scheme were implemented in that financial year.*

1.2 The Government of Wales Act 1998 also provides for schemes on local government and sustainable development. In addition, the Act requires the National Assembly to put into place arrangements for consultation with business and to ensure due regard for equality of opportunity for all.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ASSEMBLY – VOLUNTARY SECTOR RELATIONS**

2.1 In this Scheme, the term “voluntary sector” includes voluntary organisations, community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, community co-operatives and enterprises, religious organisations and other not for profit organisations of benefit to communities and people in Wales.

2.2 The National Assembly is committed to recognising, valuing and promoting the voluntary sector as it builds a genuine partnership with the sector.

2.3 This Scheme sets out the broad principles and shared values, which will govern the relationship between the National Assembly and the voluntary sector in Wales.

2.4 In consultation with the sector, the Assembly Government will develop and maintain a separate Action Plan by which performance against the Scheme can be monitored effectively.

2.5 A review of the implementation and impact of the Scheme and Action Plan will be conducted annually and a report submitted to the National Assembly.

2.6 In working in partnership with the voluntary sector the National Assembly seeks to:

- encourage good practice and co-operative methods of decision making;
- review performance, particularly where organisations receive Assembly Government finance directly as service providers;
- encourage the voluntary sector through co-operation and training as well as through financial support;
- encourage volunteering initiatives and the idea that voluntary activity is an essential part of active citizenship;
- encourage the work of umbrella organisations and co-operation between such organisations;
- recognise the specific needs and special contributions of particular groups within the sector;
- encourage a growth in the contribution of different age groups to ensure that voluntary activity is seen as a part of active citizenship irrespective of age or other circumstances;
- measure and recognise what matters to the voluntary sector; and,
- assess carefully, in consultation with relevant voluntary organisations, the potential impact of policy changes upon the sector.

### **Shared values**

2.7 The National Assembly and the voluntary sector share a number of common values about the role of individuals and communities in a modern

democracy, which will underpin all aspects of this Scheme. The goal is the creation of a civil society which:

- has a duty to promote equality of opportunity to all its members regardless of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, language preference, religion or family/domestic responsibilities;
- is inclusive and enables people to participate in all its economic, social and cultural activities;
- empowers people to participate in the development of their communities and recognises the value of such a contribution;
- relies on people's voluntary action to foster community leadership and enhance local democracy;
- comprises public, private and voluntary sectors which complement each other and seek to tackle social issues in a spirit of partnership between them;
- enjoys the benefits of a healthy environment and a thriving competitive economy, alongside vibrant community life, as a result of its commitment to sustainable development.

2.8 The relationship between the National Assembly and the voluntary sector must be built on integrity, trust and mutual respect.

2.9 The National Assembly recognises that partnership means working together towards a common set of goals and appreciation of each party's distinctive contribution.

2.10 The National Assembly recognises:

- the wide scope and diversity of voluntary activity across the whole spectrum of society; the contribution voluntary and community organisations and volunteers make to the economic, social, environmental, cultural and linguistic life of Wales; and the role they play in formulating and delivering public policy;
- that voluntary and community organisations are independent organisations which determine their own priorities and manage their own affairs;
- that volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and is an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain;

- that the voluntary sector has an obligation to represent the interests of its constituents;
- that voluntary sector organisations operate within the principles upon which they are founded, and are accountable to their members and the individuals and communities with whom they work.

#### 2.11 The National Assembly:

- designates the First Minister to have overall responsibility for the Voluntary Sector Scheme.
- designates an Assembly Minister to have specific responsibility for the interests of the voluntary sector;
- expects every part of the National Assembly - Cabinet, committees and officials - to promote the interests of the voluntary sector in its work and decision making;
- will maintain:
  - \* a policy on working in partnership with the voluntary sector and measures to support this (Chapter 3);
  - \* arrangements for consulting the voluntary sector (Chapter 4);
  - \* a policy on volunteering and measures to promote volunteering (Chapter 5);
  - \* a policy on community development and measures to promote it (Chapter 6); and,
  - \* a Code of Practice for funding the voluntary sector which is published as separate document.

### **Code of Practice for funding the Voluntary Sector**

2.12 The National Assembly recognises that its policies on the voluntary sector, must include measures for financial support of the sector. The level of resources available will determine the extent of such measures and funds will need to be targeted according to Assembly Government priorities. The National Assembly also recognises its role in seeking to ensure that the voluntary sector has fair and reasonable access to public funds.

2.13 Across the range of its functions, the National Assembly is committed to establishing and maintaining procedures to ensure accepted best practice in the administration of its grant schemes and those of agencies, which administer funds on its behalf. The following key criteria are contained in the

Code of Practice for funding the Voluntary Sector which the Assembly Government will maintain, use and promote:

- clarity in the objectives of grant schemes and their eligibility criteria;
- transparency and objectivity in the administrative and assessment procedures;
- consistency between funding programmes;
- arrangements for agreeing meaningful objectives and performance indicators, commensurate with the level of funding, by which an organisation is to be monitored and evaluated;
- progress towards three-year funding arrangements for core-grants as a means of promoting effective long term financial planning;
- the effective targeting of resources.

2.14 The Code of Practice for funding the Voluntary Sector and the terms and conditions issued at the time a grant is made provide the mechanism by which the Assembly Government will monitor the use made of any assistance provided by it to relevant organisations.

2.15 The Assembly Government is also committed to promoting good practice by other funders.

2.16 The Assembly Government will consult the voluntary sector before making changes to the Code of Practice for funding the Voluntary Sector.

## **CHAPTER 3: HOW THE ASSEMBLY PROPOSES TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR.**

### **General**

3.1 In this scheme, “partnership” means working together towards a common set of goals and recognition of each party’s distinctive contribution.

3.2 For the National Assembly’s commitment to work in partnership with the voluntary sector to be implemented properly, there need to be mechanisms for dialogue between the parties and arrangements for implementation that provide effective systems for monitoring and review.

3.3 The National Assembly recognises that there are several different kinds of agreement that can be described as partnerships. They range from one side simply supporting the other organisation's plans, to full involvement in decision-making and control of resources. A description of the different levels of partnership is given at Annex A.

3.4 For the purposes of this Scheme, partnership means that the voluntary sector:

- has an equal say with National Assembly about the arrangements by which the National Assembly and the voluntary sector will work together;
- will contribute at a formative stage in informing the development of policy and programmes across the National Assembly and has its proposals assessed against the same criteria as the public sector;
- contributes its views on the procedures for the administration of resources and priorities for the distribution of resources for the voluntary sector;
- has access to its own information, training, and capacity building services and resources;
- has opportunities to lead in those areas where it is best placed to do so.

3.5 The National Assembly recognises that different parts of the sector have differing abilities to engage with it. The National Assembly acknowledges that there should be realistic expectations in operating the partnership and recognises that there is a link between the investment of resources in the voluntary sector and the ability to engage on an equitable basis .

## Dialogue and co-operation

3.6 The National Assembly, in conjunction with the WCVA, will identify the relevant voluntary sector networks and umbrella bodies with an interest in its work and agree practical arrangements for dialogue and co-operation at the operational level. In return the National Assembly expects voluntary organisations to co-operate with each other and form appropriate networks that are able to relate to the National Assembly collectively on common matters of policy and administration. The National Assembly aims to meet regularly with representatives from voluntary sector networks for this purpose. These arrangements will cover: -

- exchange of information and views on developments in National Assembly policies and priorities;
- the means by which all parts of the voluntary sector can engage in and contribute to the work of the National Assembly.
- informing the National Assembly of developments and concerns identified by the voluntary sector through its work;
- participation in working groups to develop new policies and strategies;
- consultation arrangements on policy or new strategic programmes;
- agreeing the parameters for co-operation in implementing such programmes; and,
- dealing with administrative arrangements for funding programmes.

3.7 Each Assembly Minister shall meet with representatives of the relevant networks of voluntary organisations covering their areas of responsibility at least twice in any one calendar year. These meetings will review the operation of the Scheme and the level of consultation and discussion that has taken place between the network and the appropriate Minister/Committee. These meetings will review past activity, anticipate forthcoming issues and consider resources. One of the meetings will be tied in with the Assembly Government's Budget Planning Round and will focus on funding issues. Reports of these meetings will be provided for Committees and it will be incumbent on Committees to debate these reports at least annually. The reports of the meetings between the Assembly Ministers and the relevant voluntary sector networks will also be reflected in the Annual Report, to be prepared in consultation with the voluntary sector, on performance against the Scheme.



3.8 The National Assembly agrees that the operation of these arrangements shall be jointly monitored and reviewed. In some cases there will already be voluntary sector lead bodies or informal networks that can facilitate this exchange. In others it may be necessary for a number of leading organisations to come together to form new arrangements. Many will need to relate to more than one part of the National Assembly and voluntary sector organisations should ensure they register their interest appropriately.

### **The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council**

3.9 In pursuit of its intention to work effectively with the voluntary sector, the National Assembly will maintain a Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.

3.10 This Council shall consist of National Assembly Members and representatives appointed from the voluntary sector. A designated National Assembly Minister shall chair the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council shall report to the National Assembly.

3.11 The National Assembly will appoint eleven representatives, reflecting party balance, to be members of the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.

3.12 The voluntary sector representatives shall comprise three representatives of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and twenty one sectoral representatives.

3.13 The Wales Council for Voluntary Action will facilitate the selection of the voluntary sector representatives and ensure that, as far as possible, they reflect a cross section of voluntary sector interests and activities.

3.14 Officials of the Assembly and officers of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action will support the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. Other bodies/individuals representing the interests of voluntary sector organisations may also be invited to attend and speak at Voluntary Sector Partnership Council meetings at the Chairman's discretion.

3.15 The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council will normally meet at least twice in every calendar year and may also establish working groups to undertake specific pieces of work in relation to this Scheme. The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council may also appoint individuals with relevant expertise from the voluntary or public sectors to advise at its meetings or to serve its working groups.

3.16 The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council shall:

- advise on the implementation, monitoring and review of the Voluntary Sector Scheme including establishing indicators by which the Scheme shall be evaluated;

- facilitate consultation with relevant voluntary sector organisations and public sector bodies on the Scheme's implementation, operation and review;
- advise on implementation and operation of the Scheme and prepare an annual report for consideration by the National Assembly;
- propose arrangements for reviewing the Scheme after each ordinary election of the National Assembly and assist in the review process;
- consider issues that relate to the implementation of the Scheme that affect, or are of concern to, the voluntary sector and make recommendations to the National Assembly;
- consider issues that relate to the functions and responsibilities of the National Assembly that affect, or are of concern to, the voluntary sector and are wider than the responsibilities of a single subject committee, and make recommendations to the National Assembly.

### **Information and understanding**

3.17 To promote knowledge and understanding of the relative strengths and limitations of the National Assembly and the voluntary sector, the National Assembly will:

- collect information on what voluntary sector organisations exist, what they do and what capacity they have to deliver their objectives;
- produce information about Assembly Government departments, agencies and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies in Wales, their purpose and areas of responsibility, their main policies and priorities and their main programmes of activity, with particular attention to those policies and priorities that relate to the voluntary sector;
- identify opportunities for joint training between the Assembly's staff and voluntary sector organisations;
- hold joint events with the voluntary sector at appropriate levels to agree working arrangements and set objectives;
- arrange a programme of secondments, exchanges, or short periods of shadowing jobs, between voluntary sector staff and Assembly officials.

## Proofing policies

3.18 The National Assembly will ensure that it takes into consideration at a formative stage the implications for the voluntary sector of new policies, or changes in policy. The National Assembly will seek as far as possible to avoid or to ameliorate any undesirable impact on the voluntary sector and to identify and encourage opportunities for voluntary sector organisations. Voluntary sector organisations concerned will be informed and involved in discussions at the earliest opportunity and before formal consultation where possible.

3.19 The diverse interests of voluntary sector organisations mean that it is not possible to specify every area of policy that might be of concern to the voluntary sector. The National Assembly will however have regard to the following questions to help to identify possible areas of interest.

- Does the policy specifically refer to voluntary sector organisations? Have relevant voluntary sector organisations been contacted or consulted about the proposals and are the assumptions made about the sector in the proposals correct?
- What new roles, responsibilities or requirements does it place on voluntary sector organisations, or what new opportunities does it present for them?
- Will the requirements affect adversely the work of certain voluntary sector organisations and will they find it difficult to comply with them?
- Will the proposed new requirements apply to volunteers? Will it make it more difficult for them to volunteer, especially if they are full-time volunteers?
- Is there scope for exemptions or special provisions to reduce or eliminate any adverse impact on the voluntary sector ?
- When policies and programmes are developed involving the provision of services by outside organisations, is the voluntary sector considered as a possible provider? Will the requirements make it more difficult for them to become involved?
- Are there particular objectives that the voluntary sector may be best suited to address and, if so, are there arrangements to facilitate this ?
- Are the proposals constructed and presented in such a way as to get the most useful and effective contribution from voluntary sector interests? Is there scope to include measures to assist the voluntary sector to become involved in areas where it is underdeveloped and under-resourced? Is the sector represented in new structures to take forward the proposals?

- Where consultation is planned, are the views of voluntary sector organisations and volunteers being sought? Could the voluntary sector help to canvass the views of service users, or specific communities of interest, about the proposals?

3.20 The voluntary sector may be affected by directives and proposed legislation arising out of the European Commission as well as out of domestic legislation and policy. The National Assembly will seek to ensure that the same considerations are applied to policy developments in these areas.

3.21 The Assembly Government shall establish and maintain an internal liaison group comprising representatives of each Assembly Department having contact with the voluntary sector to exchange information and ensure that the principles and commitments of the Scheme are being upheld.

3.22 In addition, the Assembly Government will regularly consult a cross-section of organisations to establish how well the arrangements are working. It will also collate the annual report for the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council to consider.

3.23 The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council will consider and make recommendations on the measures needed to improve the performance of the National Assembly, its agencies and sponsored bodies and the voluntary sector. Examples of good practice will be promoted.

3.24 The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council will attempt to resolve disputes between the voluntary sector and the Assembly Government. Complaints will be referred to the Assembly Government's complaint procedures

## CHAPTER 4: PROCEDURE FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN WALES

4.1 The Assembly Government is committed to:

- *setting out agreed procedures for consultation on policy changes and new policy developments which affect voluntary and community organisations and/or volunteering interests which include:*
  - \* *opportunities for continuing discussion between voluntary and community organisations and volunteering interests and National Assembly to foster early understanding and involvement in policy development;*
  - \* *consultation arrangements that normally allow adequate time for wider consultation with networks and service users;*
  - \* *the role of umbrella bodies and intermediaries in facilitating consultation;*
  - \* *feedback to respondents on the replies to and outcomes of the consultation;*
  - \* *opportunities for the sector to continue to be involved at the implementation and evaluation stages of the policy.*

4.2 The Assembly Government will ensure that these commitments are fully reflected in guidance to its staff to be followed when undertaking consultation exercises. These procedures will be detailed in the guidance issued to Assembly officials and will be the subject of periodic consultations with the voluntary sector

4.3 In general, consultation by the Assembly Government may be undertaken in writing by way of opinion surveys; focus groups; and user panels as appropriate. In particular, surveys may be used to give an indication of the weight of views, while qualitative research through focus groups or panels may be used to provide an understanding of the range and complexity of views.

4.4 Written consultation may include, wide public consultations to small-scale consultations with specialist groups on matters which are of restricted interest or technical.

4.5 The Assembly Government will build consultation into plans for policy development, both on specific proposals and services, and more generally. It will undertake consultation at a sufficiently early stage of policy development so that the resulting proposals are in line with current experience and thinking in the field and avoid incorrect assumptions and misunderstanding at later stages. The Assembly Government recognises that continuing dialogue with the voluntary sector can help to keep both sides informed about developments

and avoid unnecessary surprises. Although it may not always be possible or appropriate to share the detail of new policy before it is announced, the Assembly Government will, wherever possible, make the voluntary sector aware, in general terms, of forthcoming developments and seek their initial views on the subject.

4.6 The Assembly Government recognises that consultation has to be an open and meaningful process if it is to command credibility and make the best use of the time and resources of all those involved. The Assembly Government will make clear in the process those matters that are open to consultation and those which are not.. This will make it clear to outside organisations where they need to concentrate their efforts.

4.7 The Assembly Government recognises that it is for individual voluntary sector organisations to decide whether and how to respond taking into account their particular circumstances and available resources. A failure of an organisation to respond to a particular consultation will not be regraded as being due to a lack of interest.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE ASSEMBLY'S POLICY ON VOLUNTEERING**

5.1 The National Assembly values volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and as an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

5.2 The National Assembly will seek to:

### **5.2.1 improve access to volunteering for people from all sectors of society by**

- ◆ recognising that everyone has a right to participate in the life of their community and to society in general through volunteering
- ◆ agreeing that volunteers should reflect in respect of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, language and religion the communities and the people they serve
- ◆ agreeing that volunteering should be available to all people in society and special measures should be taken to include those who are vulnerable to social exclusion such as those from ethnic communities, those who are disabled and those with learning difficulties
- ◆ recognising that volunteering takes place both formally and informally and measures of support should be sensitive to the circumstances in which it is carried out.
- ◆ recognising the contribution that volunteers can make in delivering National Assembly initiatives and identify elements of its policies which may relate to volunteers;
- ◆ requiring in its funding and grants schemes that organisations demonstrate an effective policy for involving volunteers from a cross section of society which is appropriate to the nature of the organisation;
- ◆ ensuring that when drawing up grants and tenders, the contribution of volunteers to the delivery of the service is encouraged, and encouraging other funders in the public sector to do the same;
- ◆ encouraging organisations to make proper provision to recruit volunteers from groups vulnerable to social exclusion including disabled people, those from ethnic communities, and those with special needs.

### **5.2.2 make it easier for people to participate in volunteering by**

- ◆ supporting efforts to ensure that unnecessary barriers do not deter people from volunteering
- ◆ Agreeing that participation in volunteering should not be determined by material wealth.
- ◆ understanding the importance of good practice and effective management for valuing and retaining volunteers
- ◆ taking account of the cost of involving volunteers in its voluntary sector funding and purchasing initiatives
- ◆ encouraging funders and purchasers of services to incorporate financial provision for the cost of involving volunteers in its voluntary sector funding and purchasing initiatives;
- ◆ developing mechanisms for considering the impact of new legislation and regulations on volunteering;
- ◆ encouraging local authorities to put in place policies to support volunteering and to include reports on the impact of volunteers in their annual reports and publications;
- ◆ encouraging public sector organisations to put in place policies to support volunteering and to include reports on the contribution and impact of volunteers in their annual reports and publications.

### **5.2.3 encourage the more effective involvement of volunteers by**

- ◆ agreeing that the issue of good practice is a joint responsibility and that voluntary organisations, including volunteer bureaux and appropriate Assembly Government departments should disseminate good practice guidelines such as the *Code of Practice for Involving Volunteers* (produced by the Wales Volunteering Forum) as widely as possible;
- ◆ seeking to ensure that training in volunteer management is addressed by both the voluntary and statutory sectors;
- ◆ seeking to ensure that volunteers are safe, treated fairly, and managed appropriately.
- ◆ considering ways to ensure the development of training materials for volunteer managers is maintained



- ◆ encouraging funders and purchasers of services to incorporate financial provision for the cost of management training in its voluntary sector funding and purchasing initiatives
- ◆ encouraging local and statutory authorities to develop policies for involving volunteers
- ◆ encouraging training in working with volunteers for staff whose responsibilities include volunteer management and encourage professional bodies to incorporate volunteer management as part of their professional training;
- ◆ examining the issue of accrediting and validating voluntary activity, in partnership with appropriate accreditation bodies and volunteer development agencies throughout the UK;
- ◆ supporting the interests of local community action and volunteering in the Assembly Government's ongoing work on Better Regulation which seeks to improve regulation and cut red tape.

#### **5.2.4 improve the organisation and infrastructure of volunteering by**

- ◆ agreeing that a strong infrastructure is key to the development of volunteering in Wales
- ◆ agreeing that access to independent local information, advice and support is a crucial element in encouraging people to volunteer
- ◆ recognising the role of volunteer bureaux in developing and disseminating good practice, representing volunteers' views and advocating on their behalf
- ◆ supporting the continued development of a network of volunteer bureaux and other means to promote, develop and support volunteering in each local authority area
- ◆ recognising and supporting the development of the volunteering networks - Wales Volunteering Forum and Wales Association of Volunteer Bureaux - for the promotion and encouragement of good practice in volunteering;
- ◆ recognising the role of WCVA in relation to strategic leadership, policy and planning, and the identification and dissemination of good practice within the field of volunteering

- ◆ reviewing the level and targeting of funding to support volunteering and the volunteering infrastructure.

#### **5.2.5 raise the status and improve the image of volunteering by**

- ◆ agreeing there should be greater publicity for the achievements of volunteers
- ◆ agreeing it will work with the voluntary sector to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- ◆ encouraging local authorities, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts and the private sector to celebrate the involvement of volunteers by their inclusion in in-house magazines, annual reports, and in the consideration of awards schemes
- ◆ continuing to support appropriate awards for volunteering and voluntary organisations.

## **CHAPTER 6: HOW THE ASSEMBLY WILL PROMOTE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

6.1 The National Assembly recognises community development as ‘people working together, on issues they identify, to bring about change through collective action’. It is a process, translating into actions to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of communities, meeting the needs and aspirations of those communities through the combined efforts of the community and the organisations which serve it.

6.2 Complementary to private investment and to public sector service provision, community development work is a distinct approach which encourages communities to become directly involved in shaping their own futures – defining their own needs, considering how those needs might be met, deciding collectively on priorities, and acting together..

### **The Assembly as a partner in community development**

6.3 The National Assembly recognises the value and benefits of community development. Community development is integral to its policies and initiatives across the broad spectrum of social, economic and environmental activity. This approach can help to promote community regeneration, combat social exclusion, build sustainable communities, and contribute to a culture of lifelong learning.

6.4 The National Assembly believes that the collective strength of communities and their partners needs to be harnessed to find shared solutions to shared problems. The problems that face our communities rarely have one cause or affect only one part of people’s lives.

6.5 The promotion of sustainable development runs throughout the policy agenda of the National Assembly. In community development this means building the skills of local people to ensure that there are sufficient community leaders and groups of local people able to manage local projects and effectively represent and mobilise community support.

6.6 The National Assembly acknowledges that in the most disadvantaged communities the capacity building needed for those communities to be fully engaged in the community development process is a long term process for which long term support is vital.

6.7 Groups engaged with community development actions should have their work acknowledged as being part of mainstream programmes to tackle the deep-rooted problems of social exclusion. The National Assembly will seek to ensure that community development approaches form part of these mainstream programmes.

6.8 Community development can achieve successful and substantial outcomes in building active communities and in tackling deep rooted problems of economic decline and social exclusion. But a framework of support is needed. This must include:

- support for capacity building to build the ability of organisations and individuals within the community to take a lead in, and sustain, the development of their community;
- direct advice to and services for community organisations and volunteers, independent of other partners;
- a willingness to enter into partnerships in which the community have a major stake in determining in their own future;
- long term investment in communities both through direct grant aid and through the commitment of public agencies;
- evaluation of community development and the dissemination of good practice;
- support for and encouragement of social entrepreneurs.

### **Assembly Government support for community development**

6.9 The Assembly Government will provide five main types of support for Community Development.

- Direct funding for community development. The Assembly Government supports individual projects, either directly, or through grants or credit approvals issued to local authorities within general guidelines which include encouragement of strategic and community based approaches.
- Ensuring local government support by promoting local compacts and agreeing levels of financial contributions to voluntary sector regeneration projects (e.g. agreement that local authorities spend at least 20% of former SDS resources in the sector).
- Funding for intermediaries (e.g. CVCs, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Development Trust Association) who promote community development through advice, support, training, and best practice and provide the infrastructure for community led initiatives.
- Indirect funding and support for community development where its agencies, such as the Welsh Development Agency and Training and Enterprise Councils are charged with: developing policies, measures and procedures to support community development, and promoting awareness within these agencies and in local authorities of the cross cutting links between their mainstream activities and the community development process.
- Developing sympathetic policy and practice across the whole of the Assembly Government's work by funding research, evaluating grant programmes, disseminating and funding exchanges of good practice and

ensuring that the interests of voluntary and community organisations are promoted.

## **Priorities**

6.10 The Assembly Government believes that to deliver the vision of a confident, outward- looking Wales, where all can realise their potential, it is necessary that all programmes and policies work together, cutting across traditional functional boundaries where necessary, to prioritise their contribution to **better job opportunities; better education; better health; better quality of life and best value.**

6.11 Community development has an important role in delivering these aspirations.

## **European Programmes and community development**

6.12 The Assembly Government believes that specific, targeted action is needed to address the problems of Wales' most disadvantaged communities and allow their members to develop the skills and confidence to enter mainstream economic life and to design locally appropriate solutions to community problems. There is a rich history of community activity which make these types of intervention particularly appropriate.

6.13 Under the new programmes operating from 2000- 2006 the key priorities for community development will be to:-

- Develop the capacity of community organisations to allow them to determine local needs and build effective partnerships;
- Support the expansion and development of enterprises in the social economy, building on past good practice;
- Provide support for targeted initiatives that allow people unable to take advantage of mainstream services – including the long term economically inactive – to enter training or employment.

6.14 These initiatives will need to be targeted carefully to ensure resources are directed at the most marginalised communities. Clear criteria will be developed to identify communities who require support. Community led activities will need to be accompanied by local projects to improve the physical environment and infrastructure or provide key services presently absent.

# Annex A

## Levels of Partnership

Partnership is a key concept in many Assembly Government policies. However the word is used to describe a variety of relationships and is frequently ill defined. Organisations are often asked to join partnerships but need to be clear about what is the exact nature of the request and respond accordingly. It may be preferable to replace the all-purpose term partnership with more precise language that reflects more accurately the nature of the relationship that is being sought. The following are examples of the different levels of partnership that can exist.

<b>1</b>	<b>Supporter</b>	In this case, the organisation is asked to be a partner, but what is really meant is will you support this initiative / project / application with your name or a letter, and come along to occasional meetings.
<b>2</b>	<b>Agent</b>	In this case, the organisation is asked to be a partner in delivery, but what is really required is an agent. Here the task is pre-determined, with or without discussion, and payment is made to deliver the task. The power remains with the commissioner.
<b>3</b>	<b>Adviser</b>	Many organisations are asked to sit on advisory committees. These are often <i>second tier</i> non executive structures to involve a wider range of players. Advisory committees rarely have much influence, and may serve the interests of the main players (in demonstrating inclusiveness) rather than the participants. The power remains with the main committee.
<b>4</b>	<b>Junior members</b>	In this case, the organisation is on the main decision making structure, but has inferior status either in numbers or influence. It may be over dependent on other members for its existence or funds or policy. Power remains with other actors, and is used to keep the organisation in its secondary place.
<b>5</b>	<b>Joint ownership</b>	In this case, the organisation is an equal partner, and is seen and treated as such. It is there as of right and from inception. It has an equal say over terms of reference, criteria, policy and distribution of resources. It has access to its own constituency, research, information, and its resources are not determined by other members.
<b>6</b>	<b>Community ownership</b>	As above, except that the community representatives must have at least 50% of the members.