

## **Stakeholder forum – online meeting note**

**Monday 10 June 2024 10:00am – Noon**

### **Attendees:**

Charlene Brooks	Belfast Healthy Cities
Ian Simpson	NIPSCBF – Vice Chairperson
Gerry McCurdy	Chief Commissioner
Tony Clarke	Start 360
Mary T Conway	Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
Denise Copeland	NICVA
Colin Hayburn	Extern
Lisa Keys	Boys Brigade NI
Bill Megraw	County Down Rural Community Network
Diarmuid Moore	Early Years
Brenda McMullan	Halifax Foundation
Louise Little	North Down Community Network
Ashleigh Roberts.	EBCDA
Ann Breslin	CCNI – PDM, Notetaker.

### **Apologies:**

Andrea Brown, Michele Crilly, Denise Hayward, Conor Flanagan, Loraine Griffin, Clare Jenner, Valerie McConville, Derek Powell, Sophie Nelson.

Ref	Item	Action point/Decision
1	Apologies	Noted  Resignation: Leslie-Anne Newton of ARC-NI.  <b>AP1:</b> Note of thanks to be sent to Leslie-Anne Newtown.
2	Notes of previous meeting.	<b>Decision:</b> Note of meeting accepted.  Note from Chair: on use of photography: New Terms of Reference proposes forum members have one meeting in person per year. Expectation that photo will be taken this for use in social media. Individuals will be given the opportunity to opt out. Purpose will be to promote the forum and its work.
3	Brief update on website	Policy development manager: Thanks to the volunteers from the forum for providing feedback on the mock-ups for the new website. We really appreciate your time and the views you shared. This feedback has been reviewed and shared with the developers. We will be sending a summary of all the feedback and our follow up so far to those individuals. <b>Next steps:</b> web developers to create the new website and release into a test environment. We aim to share a link to this test website with the existing volunteers in a few weeks, so they can provide feedback as we work over several months to build the new site. Our aim is to launch in late autumn once assurances on accessibility are in place.  <b>AP2: When the original site and beta site are both online what will a charity trustee or member of the public see?</b>  The URL for the original site will be the same. Small chance if they use Google they will get the beta site – but should be able to see quite quickly that it doesn't look right. Keeping the original site until the beta site is ready to take its place – so visitors to the beta site won't be able to carry out any actions. Will be text there to warn them. Then the URL's are likely to change.
James Walsh, Enquiries manager joined the meeting at 10.15am		
4	Feedback on Treatment of witnesses	During discussion of the <i>Treatment of Witnesses guidance</i> , which was welcomed by the forum following questions emerged:  <b>AP3: Can the witness withdraw at any point?</b>

		<p>Once a witness statement has been provided to the Commission and/or PSNI there may be limited scope within which the witness can seek to withdraw from the process. A witness will only have to provide oral evidence at court where their evidence cannot be agreed by both parties. For example, if it is not disputed.</p> <p><b>AP4: Should the guidance make clear that even if anonymous, at some point you may need to make yourself known?</b></p> <p>The Commission does not think this is necessary. Anyone providing a witness statement to the Commission or PSNI cannot have their identity withheld from the Tribunal or Court.</p> <p><i>Our How to raise a concern guidance, at section 7.3, also states that "The Commission does not encourage anonymous concerns and, in general, does not act upon these. However, each concern is reviewed on a case by case basis. The Commission may consider anonymous concerns where substantive information has been supplied or where several concerns have been received which focus on the same issue."</i></p> <p>We understand that this question relates to concerned parties who wish to keep their identity anonymous from the charity against which a concern has been raised. In these circumstances the Commission advises the concerned party that while it will try to keep their identity anonymous at the early stage of a concern there may be a need to reveal their name at some stage. For example: if the matter goes to the Tribunal or is referred to the PSNI and ultimately to the Court re criminal charges their identity could not be kept anonymous. They can decide whether to go ahead with the concern at that stage.</p> <p>Commission plans to introduce a short leaflet to accompany letter informing a charity that the Commission has received a Concern - to let charity trustees and Boards know what they can expect.</p>
James Walsh, Enquiries manager left the meeting at 10.40am		
5	Denise Copeland, from	

	<p>NICVA and DfC working group.</p>	<p><b>Update on Threshold working group.</b> Main points of the consultation and how to respond. NICVA have prepared a position paper and are sharing that on their website.</p> <p>Discussion re the sessions which DfC are holding – these are for information only and response to the consultation will not be collected at them.</p> <p>There was a general consensus from Forum members that meaningful consultation events should seek input in a number of ways. By offering dialogue at these events rather than just giving information it would give communities a voice and help with their understanding of what is being proposed.</p> <p><b>AP5: Chairperson to pass this view on to DfC. Commission link to liaise with Chair on preparing letter on headed Commission paper.</b> Draft letter sent to Chair on 17 June 2024.</p> <p><b>AP6: Commission link to follow up on Commission tweets about these events to make clear they are for information only and not to gather consultation responses.</b></p> <p>Query re situation where charity in law is below the threshold and does not have to register – would the Commission consider providing training on what is a charity in law. Commissioner’s will be considering a <i>Thematic report: Refused entry on the register – understanding why?</i> – which sets out the main questions to be considered in making an assessment about whether an organisation meets the legal definition of charity and the legal basis underpinning this process.</p>
6	Members update	No members update.
7	Dates of meetings 2024/25	<p>Wed 18 Sept 2024 – online</p> <p>Wed 13 November 2024 – in person at Marlborough House.</p>
8	Rota for blogs	<p>Delay in blogs due to calling of the General election</p> <p>Louise – liaising with Commission Comms re a blog. Mary T – volunteered Lisa - volunteered Tony - volunteered</p> <p><b>AP7: Shirley, Comms person to liaise with both.</b></p>

9	A.O.B	There were no items under A.O.B
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**Prepared by:** Ann Breslin.

**Next meeting:** online – Wednesday 18 September 2024, 10:00am – 12:30pm