



**Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action**

**DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2006 - 2009**

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## **OUR HISTORY**

NICVA began its life in 1938 as the Northern Ireland Council for Social Services (NICSS) in response to high levels of unemployment in Northern Ireland. It championed a programme of social action through welfare clubs, youth hostel tours, YMCA summer camps and a committee for women.

In 1949 NICSS opened Pine Lodge, “*a home for the elderly on the Belmont Road, Belfast*” which marked the Council’s growing responsibility as an umbrella organisation for projects tackling social deprivation in the community. Over the last 64 years NICSS has become increasingly well known. Its name changed to the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) in 1986 in recognition of the expansion of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

## **OUR ORGANISATION TODAY**

As an umbrella membership organisation, NICVA seeks to represent the general interests of voluntary organisations and community groups in Northern Ireland. In its role as a voluntary sector development agency committed to social change and community development, NICVA acts as a catalyst to promote innovation and new approaches to targeting social need. NICVA works for justice, equality and dignity throughout society by promoting opportunities for community participation in the essential decisions that affect the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

There are approximately 4,500 groups in the sector of which approximately 1,000 are NICVA members and an additional 100 subscribe to NICVA Services (Associate Members). NICVA offers its members and the voluntary and community sector services ranging from advice and information (including charity law, fundraising and human resources), management development training to lobbying and campaigning. In addition NICVA runs a conference facility and a reference library.

NICVA is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. NICVA is governed by its Executive Committee, which is directly elected by member organisations at the Annual General Meeting. Membership of the Executive Committee is broadly representative of different interests within the sector as a whole. The Executive Committee is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of NICVA, developing the mission, vision and values, and the organisation’s aims and objectives in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association and other legal and regulatory guidelines.

The Chief Executive assists the Executive Committee in providing strategic leadership to the formulation and achievement of these and to ensure that services provided meet the needs and aspirations of NICVA members and other stakeholders. NICVA employs 45 members of staff to deliver services to its membership and other organisations within the voluntary and community sector across Northern Ireland (a map showing distribution of NICVA membership is attached as Appendix 1).

## **OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

### **Mission**

NICVA's Mission is to achieve progressive social change by tackling disadvantage through voluntary action and community development.

### **Vision**

NICVA's Vision is of a healthy, vibrant, progressive voluntary and community sector which contributes to social cohesion, equality and justice.

### **Values**

In pursuit of equality, equity, justice and valuing diversity, NICVA opposes violence and discrimination of any sort on grounds that include class, gender, religious belief, political opinion, disability, race or ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, marital or family status.

NICVA is an independent association, is non party political and is committed to an active anti-sectarian approach to its work.

NICVA is committed to collective action informed by people's experience and an analysis of their circumstances. Therefore, NICVA's primary method of operation is supporting community action, whether geographically or issue-based, amongst the disadvantaged, impoverished and powerless within society.

NICVA will be open to new ideas and concepts and is willing to consider new and challenging ways of working. We will adopt a partnership and community development approach to our work so that we can share our ideas and knowledge as well as learning from others.

NICVA will strive for excellence in all we do in order to provide high quality and effective leadership and service to the sector.

NICVA will conduct its affairs in an honest, open, transparent and accountable way to its members and other stakeholders.

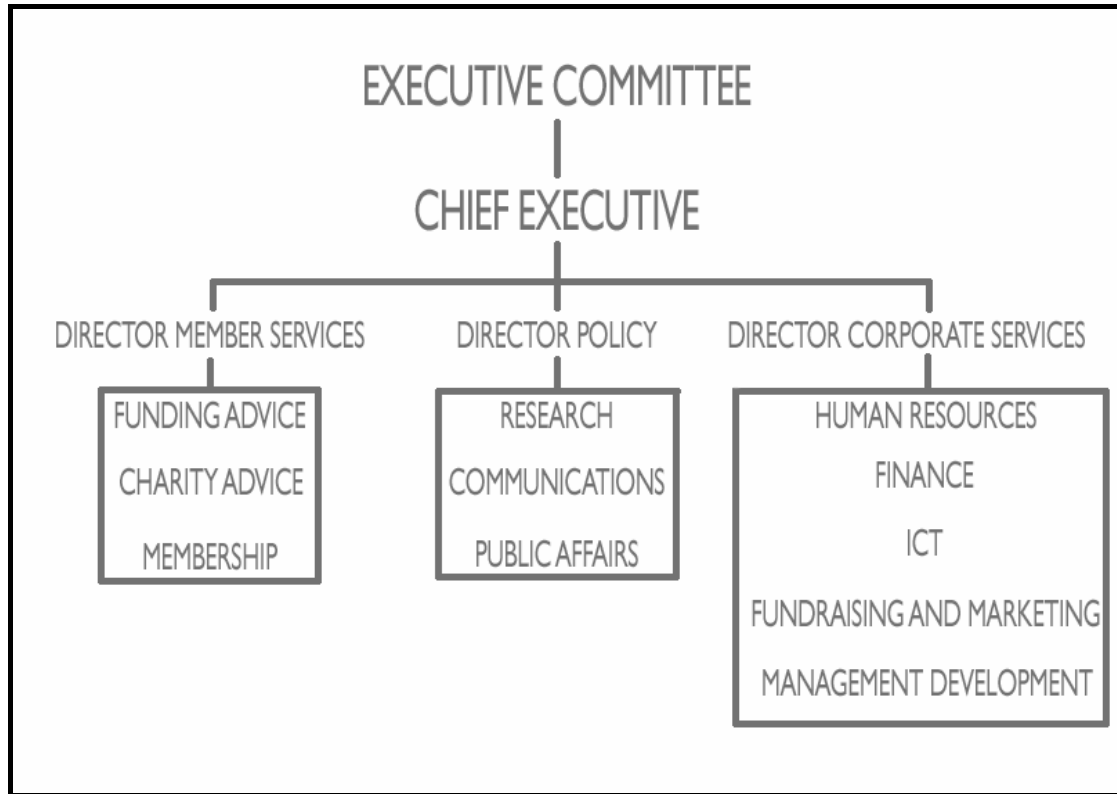
NICVA will strive to represent the interests of the voluntary and community sector to all other parties 'without fear or favour' and offer leadership to the sector in areas that fall within NICVA's competence.

NICVA values its staff as the key resource of the organisation.

NICVA's values will underpin all aspects of its work at all levels within the organisation.

## OUR STRUCTURE

The chief executive has designated authority for the day to day management of the organisation and ensures the smooth running through each director of the three core functions of the organisation, Corporate Services, Member Services and Policy.



## **OUR SERVICES**

### **What has NICVA got to offer its members?**

#### **Publications**

**NICVAnews** – a loose leaf magazine which provides up to date information on policy, events, funding, NICVA resources and services.

**SCOPE Magazine** – a unique publication which offers a platform for policy debate for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

**Enews Briefing Service** – a weekly update on the most current issues and events relevant to the voluntary and community sector.

**Good Practice Guides** – five guides for the voluntary and community sector providing practical, up to date advice on good employment practices, communications, governance, management and managing your finances.

**Euro Flash** – a monthly newsletter providing information on European funding and policy issues.

**Advertising** – preferential advertising rates in SCOPE, NICVAnews mailings and sector mailings.

#### **Resources**

**Grant Tracker** – an online funding website for Northern Ireland which includes a searchable database of funding and a wealth of advice on how to improve your fundraising.

**Conference Facilities** – extensive conference and meeting facilities available at discounted rates to our member organisations.

**Library Service** – a facility available for reference on subjects pertinent to the sector (accessed by appointment).

#### **Information and Advice**

**Outreach Programme** – free funding advice, charity advice and training on funding and legal issues to groups and networks in local areas.

**Funding Advice** – a comprehensive service which offers advice on fundraising and how to maximise funding opportunities from charitable trusts, grantmaking organisations and European funds.

**Governance and Charity Advice** – general advice on legal requirements and responsibilities for committees, individuals and organisations.

**Finance** – advice and information on pensions, payroll and financial matters.

**Human Resources** – advice, information and sample policies on all Human Resources procedures.

### **Training and Consultancy**

**Management Development Programme** – a major initiative to support management development in the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

**Courses** – a range of training courses and customised consultancy in areas including finance, human resources, dealing with the media, fundraising and legal matters.

### **Research**

**Research Roundup** – practical guidance and support to help you identify facts and figures.

**Sectornet** – the most comprehensive database of voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland.

### **Website Advertising**

**www.communityni.org** – your gateway to the Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

**Promotion** – use of NICVA’s family of websites to promote the work of your organisation.

**Recruitment** – free online advertising of your voluntary and community sector job vacancy.

### **Policy**

**Consultation** – opportunities to feed into debate and voice concerns about government policy and strategies which affect the sector.

**Representation** – opportunities to participate in a number of processes to promote social cohesion, equality and justice.

**Manifesto** – produced by NICVA every three years to influence the priorities and budgets of local political parties.

**Events, Seminars and Forums** – opportunities to learn more about policy issues, debate and discuss with colleagues and experts and share information.

### **Charitable Giving**

**Give As You Earn** – a method of helping donors make the most of their giving and charities make the most of their resources.

**Cheques for Charity** – a scheme which offers individuals and companies a simple and tax effective approach to contribute to their favourite charity.

**The Northern Ireland Charities Pension Scheme (NICPS)** – the scheme is a defined benefit (final salary) pension scheme and is open to membership from all organisations employing staff within the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

**Brokered Services**

**Discounts** – available to NICVA members on insurance, photocopiers, faxes, printers and consumables, advertising, telecommunications, training, exhibition stands, office furniture, personal security service, and ICT hardware, software and support services.

## OUR ENVIRONMENT

The voluntary and community sector has continued to develop its role significantly in Northern Ireland over the last ten years. Two major policy interventions set the general context for further development in the coming years – ‘Positive Steps’ and the outworking of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland. A number of other important considerations will also influence change and impact on the sector. Since 1997 the UK Government has developed a very positive agenda in relation to the sector. The Treasury has been explicit in its view that voluntary organisations have a key role in the delivery of public services, as highlighted in its Cross Cutting Review in 2002 and that world-class services cannot be provided on the cheap, hence its recognition that organisations delivering public services are entitled to full cost recovery. The Treasury has set a target of increasing delivery of public services through the voluntary and community sector.

‘Positive Steps’ which was published in March 2005 is the government’s considered response to the Task Force report ‘Investing Together’ which was presented to the Minister for Social Development in October 2004. The work of the Task Force and government’s response are the essential framework within which the sector will continue to develop. Government recognises its critical partnership with the sector and wants to shift its funding focus away from short-term interventions to a longer term investment strategy that is outcome focused. Key issues arising for the sector and NICVA include

- (1) The strengthening of skills in the sector to influence policy development.
- (2) The development of a skills strategy and the improvement of management and leadership skills.
- (3) The development of an ICT strategy for the voluntary and community sector that will make best use of ICT to enable continuous improvement.
- (4) Improving governance and accountability in voluntary and community organisations.
- (5) NICVA’s monitoring role and the implementation of ‘Positive Steps’ recommendations.

NICVA’s Development Plan is in effect designed to carry forward the recommendations of the Task Force report and ‘Positive Steps’.

The outworking of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) will set the scene over the next ten years for wider government and voluntary and community sector relations. The creation of seven local authorities with increased powers will create a new dynamic in that relationship. NICVA believes the Review will have implications much beyond the parameters of its report and it will also reshape central government responsibilities and those of Non-Departmental Public Bodies. This will have implications for the whole sector both those involved in service delivery as well as in community development activities locally. The RPA process offers the prospect of progressive and positive change for a sector ready to engage.

## **OUR STRATEGY**

In developing this strategic plan, NICVA has taken into account a number of factors, foremost the needs of its members, the external environment and the resources available to enable us to deliver the services.

## **OUR STRATEGIC THEMES**

We have developed three key Strategic Themes which we believe most effectively deliver our mission, vision and values and reflect best practice in governing the way we work.

### **(1) Developing the Voluntary and Community Sector**

NICVA will develop and support new and existing voluntary and community groups, paying particular attention to extending community infrastructure, enhancing the activities of networks, encouraging appropriate legislative frameworks and sharing best practice.

### **(2) Developing the Policy Agenda**

NICVA will promote debate within the sector on key issues, exploring and articulating the sector's experiences to policy makers, with a view to influencing change and increasing social cohesion.

### **(3) Developing NICVA the Organisation**

NICVA will develop itself as an organisation to continue to provide high quality services to the sector. NICVA will increase its flexibility, allowing it to prioritise resources to deal with new demands which the sector may face.

## OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

These will be achieved through thirteen strategic objectives.

- (i) NICVA will provide support and information to its members and the sector to enable them to achieve their objectives.
- (ii) NICVA will seek to improve governance practice across the sector.
- (iii) NICVA will continue its strategic approach to supporting infrastructure organisations to enhance the sector's development.
- (iv) NICVA will develop a strategic approach to the development of skills within the sector with specific emphasis on leadership and management.
- (v) NICVA will devise a strategic approach to developing the best use of ICT within the sector.
- (vi) NICVA will develop capacity within the sector to lobby and engage with political institutions including producing a Policy Manifesto every three years to influence decision makers.
- (vii) NICVA will stimulate debate and monitor government policy on major policy issues including priorities and budget.
- (viii) NICVA will devise and implement a new five year research strategy to inform its work.
- (ix) NICVA will seek to influence the implementation of the Review of Public Administration and prepare and inform the sector for the ongoing consequences of the review including community planning.
- (x) NICVA will continue to develop its membership base to reflect the makeup of the sector and develop its voice.
- (xi) NICVA will continue to ensure an efficient, effective and flexible organisation by building on its IIP status and using the EFQM model to review and develop systems, services and people.
- (xii) NICVA will ensure the ongoing development of the NICVA building as the accessible hub for the voluntary and community sector and those engaging with it.
- (xiii) NICVA will develop a co-ordinated approach in the promotion of its work to the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.