

The fourth Viewfinder provides an insight into the views of the sector on a range of issues, including smoking, the current political situation, the policy debate, the review of charities administration and fundraising.

Key Findings

SMOKING: 84.6% of respondents believe there should be an outright smoking ban in public places in Northern Ireland.

POLITICAL SITUATION: 88% of respondents feel that continued direct rule in Northern Ireland has resulted in a lack of political drive to further initiatives relevant to the sector.

POLICY DEBATE: 54.6% of respondents feel the sector has sufficient knowledge and expertise to make a full contribution to the policy debate in Northern Ireland. *Viewfinder 4* respondents have yet to see the impact of the *Compact* and *Positive Steps* initiatives.

GOVERNANCE: 61.6% respondents believe the audit and accountability requirements of funders have improved the running of their organisations.

FUNDRAISING: There is a need for investment in fundraising within the sector.

Smoking is the greatest cause of ill health and preventable death in Northern Ireland. It is not only the direct risk to smokers themselves that is cause for concern, but the secondary risks to those around them. Within the last few decades smoking in Northern Ireland has been banned in cinemas, trains, buses and hospitals.

Following the outright smoking ban in public places in the Republic of Ireland over a year ago, there have been increasing calls for such a ban in Northern Ireland. For this reason NICVA has used the fourth edition of Viewfinder to gauge the opinion of the sector on the issue of smoking.

The large majority of *Viewfinder 4* respondents (82.3%) do not permit smoking on their premises, however almost 18% still permit smoking. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that voluntary and community organisations should be smoke free (88.1%) and 94.3% of respondents believed that a smoke free work environment in the sector would benefit both staff and volunteers.

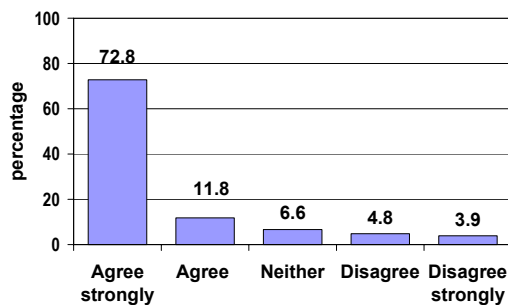
The demands for a smoking ban in Northern Ireland are growing

Smoking

It is almost hard to imagine now that in a time gone when smoking was viewed not only as socially acceptable, but as a sign of social desirability. Today the health risks of smoking are all too well known.

louder. The Department of Health's consultation initiative on smoking received a staggering 71,000 responses. It has been reported that 91% of people called for a smoking ban. In response in July 2005 the Northern Ireland health minister, Shaun Woodward, announced that the government is to introduce a partial smoking ban. He stated it would take another few months to decide whether to bring in a complete smoking ban in all public places. Furthermore, *Viewfinder 4* found there is overwhelming support within the sector for a smoking ban in public places in Northern Ireland (84.6%).

Figure 1: Government should ban smoking in public places



Many people living in Northern Ireland have witnessed for themselves the success of the smoking ban in the Republic of Ireland. This may partially explain such high levels of support for a similar ban.

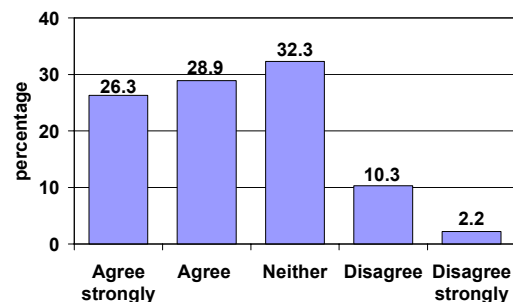
Current Political Situation

The sector has some strong messages for the government on the state of the current political situation in Northern Ireland. When

Viewfinder 1 was carried out in November 2003 approximately three-quarters (76%) believed that since the re-introduction of direct rule there has been a lack of political drive to further initiatives within the voluntary and community sector. Over a year and a half later direct rule continues and there has been an increase of 12% in the number of respondents to 88% who feel direct rule has resulted in a lack of political drive to further initiatives relevant to the voluntary and community sector.

Council chambers in Northern Ireland are often reduced to political forums characterised by bi-polar politics. Local elections were held in Northern Ireland on 5 May 2005. DUP won 29.6% of seats in the local elections, the largest share of any of the political parties, followed by Sinn Féin which won 23.2% of seats. *Viewfinder 4* respondents were questioned about their opinion on the possible impact such a result would have on the sector, as shown below:

Figure 2: The results of the recent local elections will move initiatives of the sector down the political agenda.



Over half (55.2%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents believe that the results of the elections would move initiatives of the sector down the local political agenda. Interestingly approximately one-third of respondents neither agrees nor disagrees with this statement. This lack of opinion of the political process in Northern Ireland may be a result of the effects of continued direct rule in this country.

Due to the political situation in Northern Ireland many of the key functions of government have been placed in the hands of quangos and non-elected bodies. This led to the creation of a complex system of governance. The Review of Public Administration was launched in Northern Ireland in 2002 to put in place a modern, accountable system of public administration. This review is likely to bring a reduced number of councils but with a greater remit. One-third (31.2%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents are of the opinion that such a change would improve working relationships with the voluntary and community sector; however 44.3% are uncertain if such a change would make any difference and 24.5% disagree that such a change would improve working relations.

The Policy Debate

The task to keep abreast with policy developments is a considerable undertaking for voluntary and community organisations. More than half (53.6%) of *Viewfinder 4*

respondents are of the opinion that voluntary and community organisations have sufficient knowledge and expertise to make a full contribution to the policy debate in Northern Ireland. However one in four respondents believes organisations do not have sufficient knowledge to adequately take part in such work.

A significant number of respondents (61.4%) believes that they could benefit from policy development training. There was a feeling that individuals could benefit from general training in policy development and training in new or amended legislation relevant to the sector.

Over three-quarters of all respondents (78.7%) believe that policy development is relevant to their organisation and 60.1% of individuals regularly engage in policy development work. One in five organisations (21.3%) has a dedicated member of staff who deals with policy work and 49.8% of individuals belong to a network which carries out policy work on their behalf.

In the past few years there have been a number of significant policy developments that affect the sector's relationship with government.

Northern Ireland and other regions in the UK, took part in the *Compact* initiative. Consultation was carried out with some 5,000 voluntary and community organisations which led to the *Compact between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern*

Ireland (1998). This *Compact* represents an important statement about a new relationship between government and the sector. *Viewfinder 4* sought to determine awareness of the *Compact* within the sector. Individuals were given three statements and asked to select the statement which describes the *Compact*, 25.3% of individuals chose not to answer this question. Of those who did, 83% were aware that the *Compact* sets out the general principles of shared values governing the further development and relationship between the government and the sector. However 5.8% of individuals believe the *Compact* sets out the next three years' financial commitment from government to the sector and 11.1% believe the *Compact* is a commitment by government to mainstream equality in policy-making.

Among the individuals who were aware of the *Compact*, over half (59.6%) did not have an opinion on whether it was a useful tool for the sector when working with government. Only 11.7% of individuals felt it was a useful tool, whereas 28.4% disagreed. More interestingly, almost half of all respondents (47.5%) are of the opinion that the *Compact* initiative has made no impact on their work in the sector. A further 34.7% of individuals did not have an opinion on the impact of the *Compact* and only 17.9% of individuals felt that it had impacted on their work. This sends out a strong message, that organisations in the sector have yet to recognise the benefit of the *Compact*. One must question if this

because its influence has not filtered down to those working on the ground in the sector? Or is it a result of the fact that individuals working in the voluntary and community sector are becoming lost in a sea of policies?

Following from the *Compact*, the *Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector (2004)* focused on longer-term planning and funding of the sector by government. The government's response, *Positive Steps (2005)* states it recognises the significant role of voluntary and community organisations in society and believes they have a key role to play in developing stronger and more cohesive communities. This report sets out a longer-term funding and planning framework, modernisation and improved governance structures for the sector.

Two-thirds (65.8%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents are aware of the *Positive Steps* report and 36.8% of respondents believe this report represents a serious commitment from government to invest in the future of the sector. However 18.7% do not believe this was the case and a further 49.5% of respondents did not hold an opinion. This is a time of much uncertainty in the sector and this may explain the muted reactions to the *Positive Steps* report.

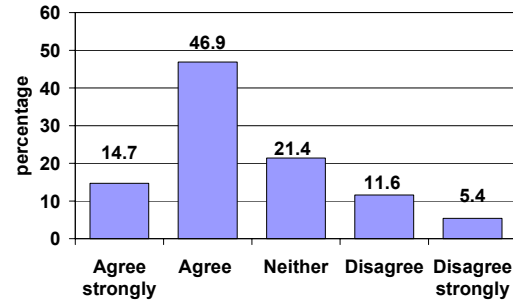
Individuals need much more than glossy reports and they may be waiting for the effects of this report to filter down to those working on the ground before they pass any concrete judgement.

Governance

The issue of good governance in the sector has become increasingly important. A large majority of *Viewfinder 4* respondents (83.4%) believe there is a clear system for governing their organisation. Approximately two-thirds (67.9%) believe the governing body of their organisation contains a suitable balance of skills and expertise to carry out its role effectively. However 13.4% of respondents do not believe their governing body has sufficient knowledge and a further 18.8% of individuals do not hold an opinion on the matter. Many funders now require the sector to have good audit and accountability systems in place. There has been criticism in some cases that audit and accountability requirements have been overly demanding on the sector. The *Positive Steps* report stresses the importance of funding requirements being proportional to the level of and risk to the funds involved.

As the sector seeks to get its house in order, *Viewfinder 4* sought to gauge opinion within the sector of these audit and accountability requirements.

Figure 3: The audit and accountability systems required by funders have improved the running of organisations in the sector.



The majority of respondents (61.6%) agree or strongly agree that the required changes have improved the running of organisations in the sector, with only a small minority disagreeing (17%).

Research within the sector has identified specific gaps in generic skills such as strategic planning, organisational and management skills. These gaps could impact on some organisations within the sector striving to ensure good governance structures are in place. To that end the *Positive Steps* report has called for the introduction of a *Skills Strategy* containing a strategic approach to the development of skills within the sector based on identified skills needs. The majority (67.4%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents believe there is the need for such a strategy. Only a very small minority (7.7%) of respondents do not believe there is a need. The remaining 24% of respondents do not hold an opinion.

Review of Charities Administration

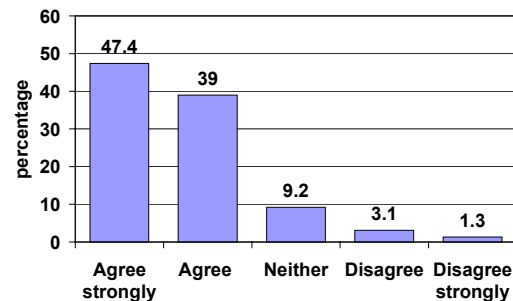
DSD (Department for Social Development) launched a consultation on the Review of Charities Administration and Legislation in 2005. The proposals set out within DSD's consultation paper put forward practical steps for the establishment of a Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, a Register of Charities and compulsory regulation.

The proposed Charity Commission would act as a regulator of charities operating in Northern Ireland. *Viewfinder 4* found 91.4% of organisations overwhelmingly support the establishment of such a Commission. In addition, the consultation paper includes proposals that the Commission should operate a Northern Ireland Register for Charities and act as a regulator for all charities operating in Northern Ireland. The register will provide accessible information on charitable activity, thus promoting transparency, public confidence and accountability. The sector welcomes such a development, with 89.8% of *Viewfinder 4* respondents believing all Northern Ireland charities should be registered with the Charity Commission. Furthermore 88.4% of respondents believe the establishment of a Charity Commission will increase the accountability and transparency of the sector.

The issue of public trust of the sector is very important. Scandals reported in the media have been damaging to the public image of

the sector. The establishment of a Charity Commission would increase transparency in the sector. There was a general feeling among *Viewfinder 4* respondents that the establishment of a Charity Commission would increase public trust in charities, with 86.4% agreeing and only 4.4% disagreeing.

Figure 4: The establishment of a Charity Commission will increase public trust in charities



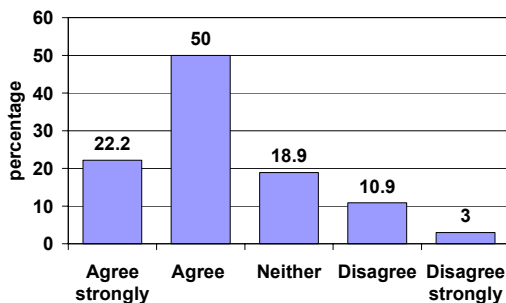
Research shows that as public trust in charities increases so too does charitable giving. Approximately one-third (32.7%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents believe the establishment of a Charity Commission in Northern Ireland will increase charitable giving. However over half (52.7%) of *Viewfinder 4* respondents do not hold an opinion.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an integral part of the work of the voluntary and community sector. People often give donations when they are asked and they rarely give when they are not asked. For this reason it is important that voluntary and community organisations put energy into fundraising. The sector relies on this income and many people are actively involved in fundraising. Most of *Viewfinder 4* respondents view fundraising to be a key component of the overall strategic plan of the organisation (85%).

Fundraising covers a wide range of activities. It can include drawing down funding to cover the operational costs of organisations and projects. Skills are required to negotiate funding applications and contracts.

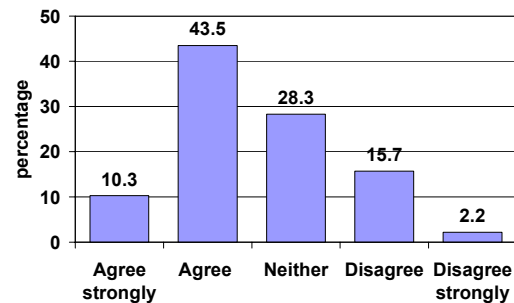
Figure 5: As an organisation, we have the necessary skills required to negotiate funding applications and contracts.



A clear majority of *Viewfinder 4* respondents are confident that they have the necessary skills to negotiate funding applications and

contracts (72.2%). Given the short-term nature of most grants, many organisations find themselves on a kind of financial treadmill. For this reason fundraising is a fact of modern voluntary and community sector work. It also can vary from large scale, organised events that receive national media coverage such as Comic Relief or Children in Need, to much smaller events such as a quiz or raffle.

Figure 6: As an organisation, we have the necessary skills required to fundraise effectively



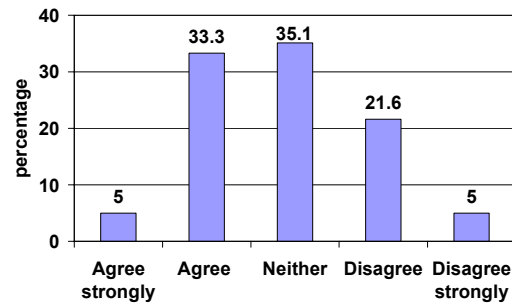
Fundraising is not simply about generating funding and resources to help an organisation survive from one year to the next. It is about helping to create a viable and strong organisation that can sustain itself into the future. This requires organisations to have a fundraising strategy. Interestingly less than half of the organisations of all *Viewfinder 4* respondents have a fundraising strategy (47.8%) and less than half (42.5%) of organisations monitor and evaluate their fundraising strategies. Furthermore less than half (42.2%) of organisations which responded to *Viewfinder 4*

have a dedicated member of staff to fundraise.

As shown in Figure 6 above just over a half of *Viewfinder 4* respondents believe their organisations have the necessary skills required to fundraise effectively. Approximately one-quarter of respondents do not hold an opinion of the fundraising skills on their organisation and less than one-quarter (24%) have a fundraising budget.

Most organisations working in the sector believe they are only scratching the surface, and if they had more resources, they could do much more. Effective fundraising enables organisations to plan for the future. However this is no simple task. In order to fundraise effectively, individuals need to up to date knowledge of funders and funding programmes. They also need awareness of the effectiveness of new fundraising methods. Even with this knowledge there is times when fundraising is not successful. When this happens it is important for individuals to revert back to the fundamentals of fundraising and ensure their organisation is guided by an up to date and realistic fundraising strategy.

Figure 7: We are confident of our ability to fundraise to meet future needs.



38.3% of *Viewfinder 4* respondents are confident of their ability to fundraise to meet future needs, whereas 26.6% of individuals do not feel confident of their ability to fundraise to meet future needs. In a time of financial uncertainty, there is a need for the sector to recognise the importance of fundraising.

The *Viewfinder 4* survey was circulated to 841 NICVA members during June 2005 – 27.7% responded.

If you would like further information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders* contact Leann Brady as follows:
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NICVA would like to thank everyone who took part in this survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated