



Community Work Ireland working collectively to support and promote community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality

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Comments on Review of Local and Community Development committees

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Introduction

Established in 1981, Community Work Ireland is the leading national organization that promotes and supports community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality and ultimately as a means of achieving social change that will contribute to the creation of a more just, sustainable and equal society.

CWI has in excess of 800 individual and organisational members working in and with the most disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland (urban, rural and issue based). Since its establishment, Community Work Ireland has been concerned to promote best practice and a commitment to social justice and inclusion in policies, programmes and measures with the remit and/or potential to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

Community Work Ireland (CWI) welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the Department of Rural and Community Developments Review of Local and Community Development committees (LCDCs).

Comment on Review

As the structure charged with responsibility for the implementation of LECs, the Local Community Development Committees must be fit for purpose. CWI members have indicated that LCDCs in a number of areas are not currently adequately functioning. They report poor attendance by members of statutory agencies and LCDC members that remain unclear about their role and not suitably qualified or experienced in relation to economic, local and community development. In a number of areas, the PPN representatives have poor accountability mechanisms and do not represent the wider issues in the area.

With regard to Governance and structure we recommend assessment of;

- The knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience of membership;

- The qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience of Chief Officers;
- Gender and other equality considerations in relation to Chief officers and other key post holders;
- Whether protocols to ensure that appropriate mechanisms to allow for the work of the LCDCs to be discharged in full have been developed and applied in each local authority area;
- Whether a full-time Chief Officer has been appointed to each LCDC;
- Whether the CEO of the local authority and the appropriate Director of Services attends LCDC meetings;
- Whether integrated working groups drawing on members from the LCDC and the appropriate SPC were established;
- Whether these working groups are still operational and have the ability to go beyond the current membership of the LCDC and SPC and include appropriately skilled others.

With regard to strategic effectiveness we recommend assessment of the extent to which;

- A vision and goals have been established that are shared between the local authority, the community sector, the local development sector and the economic development agencies;
- Goals are underpinned by a set of shared values developed collaboratively and cross-sectorally;
- Actions and initiatives have been identified that make progress towards the social and economic inclusion of marginalised communities;
- Actions to achieve the goals using a collaborative, multi-partnership approach have been identified and implemented;
- There is participation and buy-in from statutory agencies on the LECP;
- LECPs add value to actions by individual organisations/agencies;
- There is acknowledgment and plans to implement additional strategies such as the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the Sustainable Development goals, Europe 2020 as well as others;
- LCDCs have adopted an Equality and Human Rights Statement and associated actions to ensure compliance with the Public-Sector Duty;
- Agencies have been provided with direction from their parent bodies or departments to enable them to participate in the planning and implementation of partnership actions and initiatives. (The HSE has done some work on this and might be reviewed as a model to follow).

With regard to participation and engagement we recommend assessment of;

- Whether the Economic SPC community reps are involved in monitoring of the implementation of LECPs;
- The extent of participation on LCDCs by Travellers, people with a disability, disadvantaged women, migrants, older people, LGBTI community, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion;
- Whether LCDCs have reviewed their own operation and structure in relation to creating the conditions for participation including: timing of meetings, support costs for participation, advance notice of meetings, support available from Chief Officer or other staff, access to training if

necessary, induction process, style of meetings, length of meetings, access to technology for disabled members and those who wish to access remotely.

With regard to administrative support and development we recommend assessment of;

- Training and support provided to LCDC members to equip them in carrying out their role and functions in an inclusive, effective and efficient manner;
- The quality of the support provided by the local authority to the LCDC;
- The extent to which the LCDC has been facilitated to develop and monitor implementation plans.