

N.I. IMPACT FORUM MEETING 22nd Sept 2017

Present: Trevor Neilands (Chair), Sandra Bailie (NICVA), Lorraine Boyd (Bryson), Paul Donaghy (OCN NI), Claire Mulrone (Centre for Flexible & Continuing Education, Ulster Uni), Norrie Breslin (Big Lottery), Betty Murray (Extern), Peter Shields (Action Mental Health), Deirdre Timoney (Business in the Community), Jan Eldred (L&WI), and Colin Neilands (FALNI)

Apologies: John D'Arcy (OU), Emma Dunseith (BBC), Arlene Bell (NMNI), Arthur Scott (Dept of Communities), Gerry Campbell (Colleges NI), Eileen Chan-Hu (CraicNI), Martin Flynn (OCN NI), Patricia Cochrane (Dept of Econ), Susan Hunter (Dept of Communities), and Ben Harris (COP)

Welcome & Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members and there was a round of introductions as there were some new representatives present.

Trevor ran through the agenda for the meeting and its desired outcomes. The focus today being the communities stimulus paper (which hadn't been ready when the Forum last discussed the theme) and the planning for the NI Forum's conference in October.

Update on EAAL in the UK - Jan Eldred

Now that the current contract is drawing to a close the focus is very much on the London conference which Jan then outlined. Jan and Mark Ravenhall have been writing the State of the Nation report incorporating discussions from IFs and case studies from the 4 nations (case studies not used in the report itself will be uploaded to the EAAL section of LWI website). The thematic chapters are due to be sent out to conference delegates in advance. Chap 5, which looks at the asks from the different nations, has also been drafted and will be re-edited post-conference.

There has been no response yet re the application for a further 2 yrs funding, but it is hoped this might be received by the time of the conference. The development of practitioners (not just in AL) will be a focus.

In discussion it was suggested that NI should think about a communication strategy to maximise local impact from the report - both highlighting the local specific asks and issues, but also the common recommendations across the UK.



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The Chair suggested that after our own conference we should come together to discuss this and how the IF will move forward into its next phase of action.

Communities Stimulus Paper - Jan Eldred

Jan presented the attached powerpoint which was based on the stimulus paper that had been shared with members in advance of the meeting. There was discussion at 4 points as indicated on the slides.

Qs1 - relating to definitions and descriptors of adult learning and community. The nature/focus of AL means that we need a variety of definitions. The 'problem' arises when we are advocating to, for example, politicians who can feel confused, but we need to emphasise the inter-relatedness of AL's outcomes and how it assists them to achieve desired impact.

Qs2 - relating to importance of wider impact/benefits of learning and ways of identifying and measuring these. Community based AL in NI has shown the significant wide benefits it can achieve, however many funders remain interested only in outputs - i.e. that which it is simple to collect and measure. Impact based models of evaluation have been trialled, but have generally not been taken up by funders. Many evaluation reports have talked about outcomes - the data is out there - but because these are not collated the true impact achieved by AL projects is not realised. There is a danger that because of this the work of AL in the community to build peace might receive less support - we need allies (such as the police) who know on the ground the difference that is made.

Qs 3 - diversity of approaches are needed to match the variety of learners that we work with. It is important that there is more holistic training for community practitioners so that the commonalities between community-focused professions (teaching, social work etc.) are recognised and greater synchronicity achieved.

Qs 4 - in future CPD should focus on bringing related professions together. This would not only lead to co-learning, but greater coordination of services and parity of esteem. It should also ensure that the emphasis throughout is on people and their needs.

Before moving on to the next agenda item, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Jan for all her assistance to the NI IF over the past years. Jan will not be continuing with the EAAL work and we will all very much miss her visits to NI and wish her every happiness and success in whatever she pursues next.

October Conference

The Chair emphasised the importance of the event for the IF and its future. This will be the first real public airing of IF views on AL and it is critical to ensure that

the event attracts the right audience - allies and influencers with whom we can work in the future to achieve our desired outcomes.

Colin ran over the programme and asked for assistance on the day in terms of IF members leading discussion at tables and acting throughout as advocates. He has emailed invites to around 200 so far. He asked that if he circulated his mailing list that members check it and respond to him asap with any additions that they think would be important. At present it is effectively 'by invitation only' as we are trying to particularly target those we need to carry the work forward. We are aiming for c70 delegates - if it appears in a few weeks that numbers are low we can consider advertising more generally e.g. via Community NI website. Colin asked that members use their networks and relationships to ensure we have the audience we need.

As the IF does not have a web presence it was suggested that on the day we use the NICVA Twitter account as they are the hosts, but that members undertake to re-tweet and ensure wide coverage that way.

Colin will be in touch if there is other help that he needs in the run-up.

Next Meeting

In effect this will be the conference on 26th Oct. Once we know of the new contract then we will aim to meet before Christmas to plan for the coming 2 years - Colin will be in touch.

