



Department for

Communities

An Roinn

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Commonities

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Developing Women in the Community Programme

Stepping into the Future

An Independent Review

June 2022



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Foreword

The Minister of Communities, Deirdre Hargey, announced the appointment of an advisory panel on 10 March 2022 to review ‘The Developing Women in the Community’ pilot programme and provide recommendations on the way forward within six weeks of the completion of the programme on 31 March 2022.

The Department for Communities (DfC) allocated £375,000 funding to deliver the Developing Women in the Community Programme in 2021/22. The programme was delivered across 14 areas to 254 participants.

The advisory panel members were:

- Louise Coyle, Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network – Chair of the Panel
- Alison Wallace, Neighbourhood Renewal
- Eileen Murphy, Women’s Aid Armagh Down
- Rachel Powell, Women’s Resource & Development Agency
- Kate Clifford, Rural Community Network
- Sarah Burrows, Charity Solicitor, Edwards & Co
- Kendall Bousquet, Migrant Centre NI
- Carolyn Mada, The Executive Office (TEO)
- Christopher Farrington, Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime
- Joanne McPadden, DoJ.

At the time of commissioning the review, the Minister for Communities outlined ‘the panel

will be critical in ensuring that women take on active roles in promoting thriving communities, demonstrating the ability of future women as leaders and contributing to community wealth building.’

As set out in the Terms of Reference (Annex A), the panel was established to*:

- Provide input to assist with a decision process on the way forward for the Developing Women in the Community programme following completion of the pilot programme
- Serve as an important link to the community
- Ensure that the recommended Project Specification is aligned to the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime programme objectives, specifically Action B5 of the Executive Action Plan
- Provide advice to the Department following the evaluation of the Developing Women in the Community pilot programme

* Summary Full ToR in Annex A

The advisory panel conducted its work from March 2022 to the end of May 2022 and during that time, heard from a range of stakeholders including project leads who highlighted the grassroots impact of the programme 23 March 2022; successful and unsuccessful applicants through correspondence and citizen space; and the panel also met with Dr Colm Walsh to discuss his ‘Women in the Community: A Formative Pre/Post Evaluation’ report.

With regard to this engagement, a broad range of views were shared relating to the pilot programme, including the application process, the content and personal impact of the programme on the women involved, and the delivery against the initial and strategic programme aims.

There has been almost unanimous agreement that the programme phase was successful and positively impacted to varying degrees on all the women that participated; notes from the feedback session with the participants and groups included:

‘A lot of the projects involved assisting women to build their confidence and helped with personal development, including tailored support, mentoring, coaching, and peer support. They also noted benefits in combatting loneliness.’

‘The majority of the project leads talked about the transformation of the women, their personal development and the fact they felt empowered to become more participative in terms of citizenship, and were keen to see what they can do next’

‘Project leads also noted the significant benefits that were achieved by the women creating their own network, setting up WhatsApp groups, providing each other with lifts etc. Indeed, some of the project leads have arranged to meet to learn from each other.

As a result of this engagement and our discussions as a panel, we have reflected and distilled the relevant information and evidence relating to the pilot programme, the changing landscape, the programme going forward and have outlined a summary of our conclusions and recommendations.

As a panel we considered that we could have spent further time on this review but were also keen to build momentum in regard to this work and build on the successes of the pilot programme. To do this we consider there is a need to provide a time bound extension support to the last phase participants to support their leadership journey and personal development due to the brief nature of their programme and their corresponding feedback.

We also believe there is considerable merit in DfC taking forward/progressing a new open call phase taking forward the key successful elements of the most recent phase such as; the prescribed modules and the opportunity to take on a volunteering role within the community.

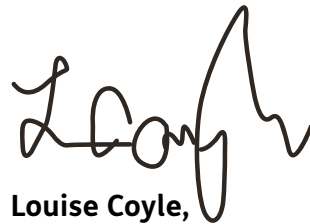
We have proposed that specific elements are included in the programme going forward to ensure that key cross cutting issues such as: Trauma informed practice and Safety; Legacy and the role of women in peacebuilding and Participatory budgeting are embedded in the Programme and delivered by experts to all

beneficiaries. We believe these plenary sessions need to allow specific time for participants to network with one another to encourage reflective practice so leaders can meet and help each other to address issue that they face.

We believe the recommendations proposed in this review may assist in supporting a society that ensures women have the opportunities to take on active roles in their communities; ‘demonstrating the ability of future women as leaders and contributing to community wealth building’, [Deirdre Hargey MLA]. We recognise, as cited in the terms of reference for the panel and the review that the final decisions on the content of the programme and the actions associated with it will be the responsibility of the DfC and the Minister for Communities prior to the

programme being relaunched (for the 2022/23 year, subject to budget).

In providing this review to the Department and Minister for Communities, we recognise that paramilitarism still has an impact on our society and on people’s lives in Northern Ireland. We acknowledge the particular impacts it has had and continues to have on the lives of women. We also recognise the opportunities that ‘Developing Women in our Community’ presents in changing this landscape and creating a positive future for everyone.



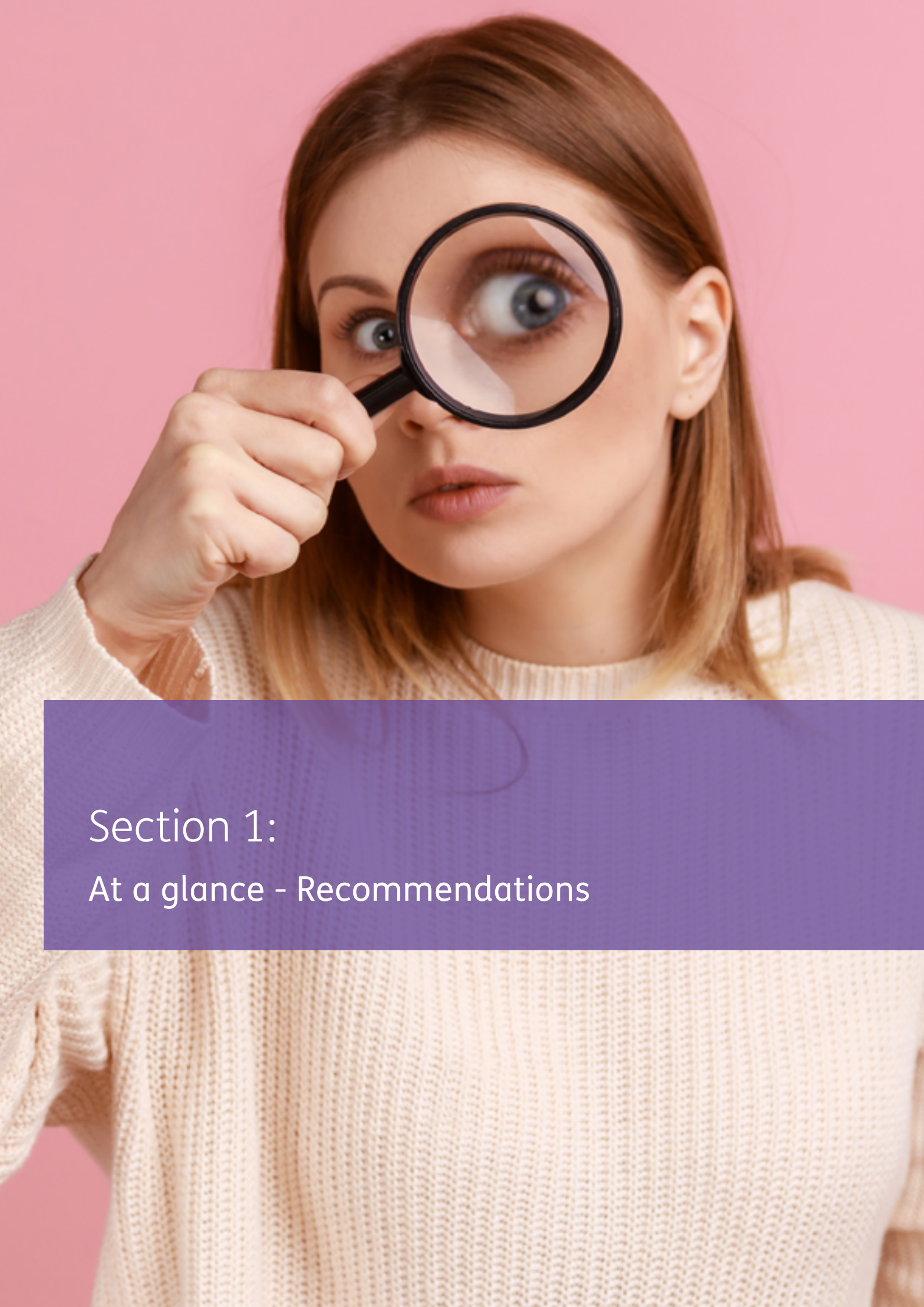
Louise Coyle,
Chair of the Advisory Panel



Acknowledgements

As members of the Advisory Panel we would like to thank DfC for establishing the panel, and the members of the DfC secretariat for supporting the panel's work so diligently. Finally, a special thanks to all those who contributed to the work

of the panel, including those who provided feedback, Dr Colm Walsh who presented his report to the panel, the programme leads, and the women involved in the programmes who shared their experience and insight.



Section 1:

At a glance - Recommendations

At a glance – Recommendations	
1	An information session is held when application goes live to take prospective applicants through the application process. It should include information to help orient potential applicants towards designing projects through an evidence and trauma informed lens.
2	Applicants are provided with a Safeguarding Template which outlines how to support and signpost women who may have experienced trauma.
3	There is a need to capture the specific activities being undertaken and to examine their relative effectiveness in achieving the desired outcome.
4	The programme should be delivered in areas that have the most identified need, which have been established by the Executive’s Programme Team in consultation with the Department.
5	There should be a pre application animation phase before the next open call with a particular focus on ensuring underrepresented groups e.g. women from an ethnical minority background and women with a disability are aware of the upcoming opportunity.
6	The Department develop a coherent Theory of Change (ToC) that is aligned with the programme benefits that have already been defined (specifically community resilience).
7	Better define the primary outcome, as well as a series of secondary outcomes that are aligned to the Benefits Management system agreed with the wider Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime Programme.
8	A third time point during evaluation cycles to assess the extent to which the changes that were observed with this sample are sustained over time.

9	Ensure longitudinal studies are carried out going forward
10	<p>Core plenary sessions should form part of programme(s), to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma informed practice and Safety* • Legacy and the role of women in peacebuilding* • Participatory budgeting/Exit Strategy building on successes • End Celebration event
11	Potential applicants to specifically consider potential synergies with other activities/resources and define anticipated multiplier effects.
12	Partially fund 14 existing organisations from pilot in 2022/23 (£140k i.e. £10k each) to support women into roles within their community and advertise via open call for £210k to deliver in 2022/23 and (350k) in 2023/24 with the proviso of dependency on budget confirmation (25k for each year retained for plenary sessions) To be delivered in 6 key areas, with contingency to run a 7th area, statistics dependent.

* At an organisation and participant level

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark blazer over a white collared shirt, is seated at a desk. She is looking intently at a laptop screen. Her hands are on the keyboard. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, likely from a large circular light fixture behind her. The background shows a perforated metal wall. A semi-transparent purple rectangle is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image, containing the text.

Section 2: The Pilot Programme

In 2021, DfC launched a programme to support women in communities where it was considered there remained a considerable level of paramilitary influence. In strategic terms, the programme sought to contribute towards safer communities, that were resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control.

The overarching aims of the programme were:

- to provide women with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become influencers in their own areas
- to take on leadership roles

A central aspect of the programme was providing access to new opportunities, whilst concurrently addressing the potential barriers that preclude women from civic engagement.

There was £375,000 funding allocated by DfC to deliver the Developing Women in the Community Programme in 2021/22. The programme was delivered across 14 areas ¹ to 254 participants.

In regard to the requirements of the programme, local organisations were invited to bid for resources of up to £30,000 to run a local project in response to identified local need that would contribute to the overarching aims of the programme.

Applicants were invited to consider the potential inclusion of a range of prescribed modules, that focused on:

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Communication skills
- Personal development
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Self-awareness
- Roles of women within families/ communities
- Problem solving
- Leadership

In terms of the timeframe for the programme:

- applications for the first round of funding closed on the 4th October 2021
- successful applicants commenced their activities between December 2021 and January 2022
- it was anticipated that projects would be for the duration of approximately 12 weeks, with all being completed by the 31st March 2022.

¹ The 14 areas are listed in the Evaluation Report, provided separately at Appendix i.

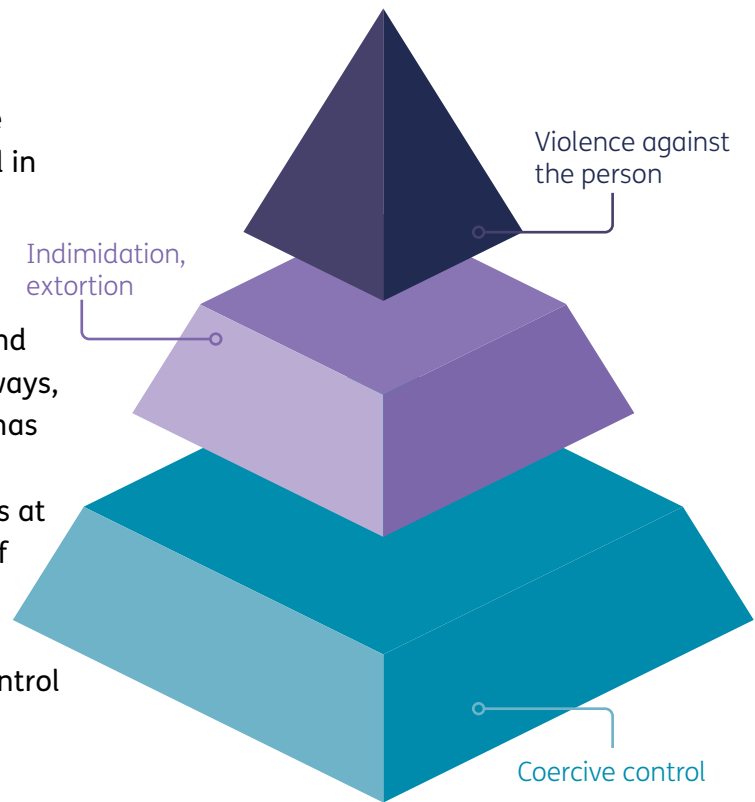


Section 3: The changing landscape

The landscape in which this Programme operates is ever changing and the Panel in their deliberations took account of this.

Types of activity

Paramilitary groups effect individuals and communities in multiple and complex ways, and the public health approach, which has been adopted by the Programme understands the harm caused by groups at various levels from the highest harms of violence against the person, through intimidation, extortion, and general criminality, to the pervasive coercive control which can be exerted in communities through other forms of manipulation.



Areas of influence

- Paramilitary activity is not experienced the same across all of Northern Ireland and there are localised hotspots
- These hotspots have seen changes over time as paramilitary groups change their areas of activity and types of activity in response to a variety of factors, including law enforcement activity and community sentiment
- The Programme has been collecting and monitoring data on paramilitary activity from a variety of sources and the areas which see the highest level of activity are Belfast, Derry, Mid and East Antrim, and Ards and North Down. Over the last two years, there has been increased levels of activity in Causeway Coast and Glens

Wider Context

The wider context has also influenced the nature and extent of paramilitary activity:

- Covid has had a significant effect on individuals and communities and over the medium term is likely to increase vulnerability to the influence of paramilitary groups and organised crime
- Brexit has been a factor which has led to instances of public disorder in some areas

- Cost of living crisis, which exacerbates the issue of poverty/persistent poverty, also provides new opportunities for paramilitary and organised crime groups to take advantage of financial vulnerabilities

It was clear from the evidence that given the modest budget for the Programme to have most impact it needs to be directed at the areas identified with most need.

The background features a perspective view of a road with a white arrow painted on it, pointing towards the horizon. The road is flanked by yellow lines. The sky is a bright, hazy yellow. A purple semi-transparent box is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, containing white text.

Section 4:

The programme going forward

Targeting the right areas and women and The application process

The panel reviewed the application process and applicants were surveyed (Appendix ii) on their experiences of the process. Feedback was primarily positive; 'Almost all respondents said that they would apply again to the programme with over half of respondents rating the application process as 'easy' (rating of 1) or 'quite easy' (rating of 2)'. There were clear areas where improvements could be made. Some respondents felt that more time to submit the application would have been beneficial; 16% of respondents found the application 'quite difficult' and just over quarter of respondents (26%) were unsuccessful in their application.

Our Panel recommends that an Application Information session when the fund opens would be beneficial and would assist in addressing both Dr Walsh's suggestion (Appendix i, Recommendation four) that applicants are oriented 'towards designing projects through an evidence and trauma informed lens' and help provide support for applicants with lower 'form filling' capacity. It would provide an opportunity for potential applicants to assess whether the fund is the right fit for their needs/planned activities and should reduce the number of unsuccessful applicants. The Panel felt that a Zoom (or equivalent) session would be the right method of delivery for this as it is both cost effective and regionally accessible.

Recommendation 1

An information session is held when application goes live to take prospective applicants through the application process.

It should include information to help orient potential applicants towards designing projects through an evidence and trauma informed lens.

The Panel would also propose a recommendation to support Groups and participants to effectively ensure safety was embedded as a Programme priority. Dr Colm Walsh's evaluation (Appendix i, p22-25) reported that whilst most women felt safe in their areas 'a significant minority (12%) did not feel safe in their community at baseline' and 57.6% had experienced 'some form of interpersonal violence either in the home or in the community'. The Panel felt that ensuring effective Safeguarding was built in at the beginning of the Programme was essential, as clearly the target beneficiaries of the Programme are less likely to feel safe. 'Women who felt least safe in their communities were also statistically more likely to report paramilitaries being most active in their areas...This is an indicator that the presence of paramilitaries is associated (directly and indirectly) with sense of safety (Appendix i, p25, Dr Colm Walsh Report).

Recommendation 2

Applicants are provided with a Safeguarding Template which outlines how to support and signpost women who may have experienced trauma.

The Evaluation Report, Dr Colm Walsh included a recommendation (Appendix i, Recommendation three) in relation to the application process and how it could support future data capture and effective evaluation. The Panel supported this recommendation and its rationale; ‘Whilst there has been an observable and measurable change across a number of areas, there is a question around whether this impact could be enhanced through being more targeted (in regard to the population and response), as well as being more considerate of how projects could explicitly embed evidence informed responses in their projects’.

Recommendation 3

There is a need to capture the specific activities being undertaken and to examine their relative effectiveness in achieving the desired outcome.

Reaching and recruiting women (from specific groups)

It is clear from Dr Colm Walsh’s Report that in the previous phase the groups who received funding had managed to effectively recruit the women the Programme was trying to reach and that; ‘the data

demonstrates that across a range of areas there was a significant impact in a relatively short period of time’ (Appendix i, p34). Taking account of increased improvement in mental health, life satisfaction and belief in their skills to engage in future training and employment provision (Appendix i, p11;34) and a ‘thirty percentage point increase in the rate of women engaged in volunteering by the end of the project’ the Panel were content that the Programme design in this Phase has significant impact. This was echoed by the women the Panel met who had participated in this Programme phase.

The limited budget means that the future programming needs to be very targeted to ensure that it is meeting the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime programme objectives, specifically Action B5 of the Executive Action Plan. The Panel explored with the Department the statistical data which is utilised to identify target areas, how that is collated, updated etc. After significant discussion and consideration, the Panel recommendation is that:

Recommendation 4

The programme should be delivered in areas that have the most identified need, which have been established by the Executive’s Programme Team in consultation with the Department.**

** Currently six areas.

It was important to the Panel that the Programme going forward reaches and recruits women in all their diversity in future delivery. The sample size of participants in this short phase made it difficult to assess if there were enough generally underrepresented women able to access the Programme (Appendix i, p8-12). It did seem evident that there were not enough women from an ethnic minority background, however some data was missing (Appendix i, p9). To ensure that future programming actively addresses under representation; the Panel recommends:

Recommendation 5

There should be a pre application animation phase before the next open call with a particular focus on ensuring underrepresented groups e.g. women from an ethnic minority background and women with a disability are aware of the upcoming opportunity.

Supporting safe participation

A clear finding from Dr Colm Walsh’s Report was that ‘a significant minority (12%) did not feel safe in their communities at baseline’ (Appendix i, p22). The nature of the Programme and its target beneficiaries mean this is clearly an issue that future Programming must be cognisant of tackling directly. Our Panel took this on board and have included a number of recommendations throughout; from application phase to programme plenary

sessions, to ensure that personal safety and the impacts of violence are addressed.

ii. Measuring success

The Panel reviewed a variety of evidence, including engagement with the participants to assess how successful this Phase of the programme was and what we could learn going forward.

In measuring public value, the Evaluation Report by Dr Colm Walsh included a number of recommendations that the Panel were content to move forward (Appendix i, Recommendation one, Recommendation two).

Recommendation 6

The Department develop a coherent Theory of Change (ToC) that is aligned with the programme benefits that have already been defined (specifically community resilience).

Recommendation 7

Better define the primary outcome, as well as a series of secondary outcomes that are aligned to the Benefits Management system agreed with the wider Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime Programme.

In relation to evaluating the Programme the Panel felt that it would be useful to have continuity of data capture building on this Phase to show the longer-term impact. In particular the demographics outlined in the Evaluation Report (Appendix i, p8-12) would benefit from this approach. The panel felt that Dr Colm Walsh's approach to the evaluation was exactly what the programme needed and provided the Panel with independent and robust evidence base for decision making. The Panel was impressed with the data captured and the methodology. This was a short phase Programme that achieved significant change. Clearly, a longer phase examining similar data in longitudinal study would allow the Department to move forward with confidence on any future programming.

Recommendation 8

A third time point during evaluation cycles to assess the extent to which the changes that were observed with this sample are sustained over time.

Recommendation 9

Ensure longitudinal studies are carried out going forward.

iii. Programme format (mandatory content and tiered provision)

Compulsory elements

Personal

- Confidence and self esteem
- Communication skills

- Personal development
- Self-awareness

Community

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Problem solving
- Leadership
- Role of women in community safety
- Role of women in peacebuilding

Families

- Role of women in families

Plenaries

The Panel spent quite some time considering how to add value to this Programme; to deliver more effectively across the Programme on issues such as safety and legacy.

Evidence from Dr Colm Walsh's Evaluation Report (Appendix i, Recommendation six) states that 'There is some evidence that projects did not actively engage participants in conversations or provide opportunities to critically reflect on the legacy of conflict and its contemporary impact, specifically, the impact on women and communities.'

The Report also outlined that: 'There is a need to focus on personal safety and violence'.(Recommendation eight) It was the Panel's view that Plenary sessions would support these cross-cutting and

fundamental issues and ensure lower capacity but well-located groups could still participate whilst ensuring that their beneficiaries would have the opportunity to achieve expert support on these critical topics.

The Panel considers that any plenaries should align with Community Development, an approach that values reflective practice in developing new skills, and supporting increased self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and community leadership.

Plenary sessions for all participants will provide opportunities for shared learning and sufficient time for networking amongst the participating beneficiaries which will support their leadership journey and was something the participants shared that they valued and would like more of.

Recommendation 10

Core plenary sessions should form part of programme(s), to include:

- **Trauma informed practice and Safety***
- **Legacy and the role of women in peacebuilding***
- **Participatory budgeting/Exit Strategy building on successes**
- **End Celebration event**

* At an organisation and participant level

Organisational requirements

- Awareness raising and training in risk management
- Identification of risk management and safety planning
- Trauma informed practice

iv. Impact and reach (inc multiplier effects*)

Dr Colm Walsh's Report (Appendix I, Recommendation seven) outlines that 'Whilst the data from this study infers change across a range of areas in a relatively short period of time, it is also clear that in some area's synergies had led to multiplier effects, thereby extending the impact'.

Recommendation 11

Potential applicants to specifically consider potential synergies with other activities/resources and define anticipated multiplier effects.

The Plenaries outlined above will provide opportunities for Groups to do this across the Programme with one another.

v. Funding for the future and Sustainability

The Panel considered the evidence from; the application survey report (Q6), our meeting with participants of this phase; the Evaluation Report and a funding options analysis to consider how best to maximise the resource for impact for the target beneficiaries.

It was evident that due to the short nature of this phase the beneficiaries and their groups felt that they had only just begun the leadership roles element of the programme. They felt that a little more time and resourcing would support women into leadership roles in the community and allow for an effective exit strategy from the Programming.

The panel was very clear that there needed to be an open call for a future phase which would have a longer period, to deliver to more beneficiaries and, that a clear exit strategy would be included. It was evident as per Recommendation 4 that there were currently 6 key geographical areas which should be the priority target areas in the next phase however the Panel have recommended that a contingency budget is retained to allow for a 7th area to be added if there is emerging need; allowing the Programme to be responsive to a changing environment and context.

The rationale for the addition of plenary sessions is outlined clearly above in relation to Recommendation 10 and the panel have recommended that a small proportion of the budget is ringfenced to deliver the Plenaries

for all beneficiaries. There was a strong belief from the Panel that learning about how participatory budgeting works and its potential to engage marginalised communities would be beneficial for participants in their leadership roles and for groups to increase their capacity for accessing future resourcing from a variety of providers. The panel felt that learning about participatory budgeting would enhance leadership skills; collective working and community wealth building and to empower the target areas with this expertise would be an investment in their future and form part of the exit strategy from this Programme which has a specific and finite remit.

Recommendation 12

Partially fund 14 existing organisations from pilot in 2022/23 (£140k i.e. £10k each) to support women into roles within their community and advertise via open call for £210k to deliver in 2022/23 and (350k) in 2023/24 with the proviso of dependency on budget confirmation (25k for each year retained for plenary sessions) To be delivered in 6 key areas, with contingency to run a 7th area, statistics dependent.



Section 5:
Conclusion

This report contains a range of data, evidence, and proposed recommendations, outlined below, that provides a basis for future delivery of the Developing Women in the Community programme. The advisory panel would underline that this report is not exhaustive, and those involved in leading, delivering and participating in the programme going forward can certainly build on these recommendations, ensuring that the programme is sustainable and remains relevant.

The advisory panel has drawn from a range of information and provided throughout a summary of the most significant themes and rationale for the recommendations provided. Although we have provided proposed recommendations for the future, we would again stress the need for the programme to be dynamic, learn lessons from delivery, and be participative (based on co-design) in terms of how it is delivered.

In providing recommendations the advisory panel has also given consideration as regards how the programme should be monitored and evaluated. The panel ultimately want to seek to ensure that the programme is sustainable and builds on the successes achieved in the pilot programme.

In closing, the Panel would like to acknowledge the huge contribution of the women and organisations who took part in this programme by adopting a flexible, supportive and innovative approach. The success of the programme is testament to their desire to make a difference. We have seen, through this programme, the significant contribution that women have made in their community, and the potential there is for the future.

Annex A: Terms of reference of the panel

(As agreed at the first inaugural meeting on 9 March 2022)

Background

1. The Department for Communities (DfC) will establish a Developing Women in the Community Advisory Panel (the Panel). The Panel will provide challenge and support to DfC on the direction and development of the new Developing Women in the Community programme. This will be evidence-based and targeted to address objective need. The Panel will provide an advisory role.

- 3.2 To identify and recruit women who will benefit most from the support and guidance provided
- 3.3 To increase the number of women involved in leadership and decision-making roles within their communities
- 3.4 To increase community capacity
- 3.5 To improve mental health and emotional well being
- 3.6 To support families and strengthen the family unit

Project Aims and Objectives

- 2. Aims:
 - 2.1 The programme will ensure that women are equipped to take on more leadership roles in public decision making.
 - 2.2 The long term outcome will be an increase in community resilience and cohesion, where people feel safe in their communities and are confident to make decisions and contribute to influential community decisions.

3. Objectives:

- 3.1 To provide training and support to women, empowering them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become involved in transformational community development

Role and Purpose of the Panel

- 4. The Panel is being established to:
 - 4.1 Provide input to assist with a decision process on the way forward for the Developing Women in the Community programme following completion of the pilot programme
 - 4.2 Serve as an important link to the community
 - 4.3 Ensure that the recommended Project Specification is aligned to the Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime programme objectives, specifically Action B5 of the Executive Action Plan;

- 4.4 Provide advice to the department following the evaluation of the Developing Women in the Community pilot programme
5. The Panel will have an advisory role in setting direction for the delivery of the programme going forward and making recommendations on its content. Final decisions on the content of the programme and the actions associated with it will be the responsibility of DfC and the Minister for Communities prior to the programme being relaunched for the 2022/23 year, subject to budget
6. The Panel's work programme will be agreed with DfC immediately following its appointment and kept under review for the duration of its work.

Scope and priorities

7. The Panel's role will be to advise DfC on the priorities and themes upon which the Developing Women in the Community programme should be developed. The panel's remit is to focus on the programme objectives and need.
8. The Panels' work programme will be agreed with DfC immediately following its appointment and kept under review for the duration of its work.

Membership and appointments

9. The Panel will have a minimum of four members. Each member will be required to dedicate a minimum of 10 hours to the project, with a view to presenting the Panel's recommendations to the Minister for Communities within 6 weeks of the end date of the pilot programme. Panel members may also be called upon in later stages of the programmes development, on an ad hoc basis
10. Panel members will be selected based on their relevant knowledge and expertise. They will have a range of expertise in, and an in-depth knowledge of, issues relevant to the development of the programme
11. Panel members will be selected from each of the following areas:
 - the women's sector / voluntary and community sector
 - will have association with the Tackling Paramilitaries, Criminality and Organised Crime programme
 - will be drawn from a relevant academic discipline
 - will have participated in the previous WICT programme

12. There will be no hierarchy of Panel members. One of the panel members will be elected by the other panel members to act as Chairperson to manage the process in line with the Terms of Reference.

Conduct and Confidentiality

13. Panel members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest, and must adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life and GDPR obligations.
14. Panel members may be given access to information not yet in the public domain or which is policy under development. This information must not be shared outside the Panel, including in the press or on social media, without prior written permission from DfC. This applies both during and after the Panel's term of appointment.

15. Membership of the Panel may be revoked by DfC if a member is found to have disclosed information inappropriately or failed to uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Administrative support

16. The Panel's work will be supported by DfC Fresh Start team. Support provided by DfC may include, but is not limited to, providing statistical information, organising meetings, taking minutes, maintaining records in accordance with legislative requirements (GDPR) and general administrative support.
17. DfC will also arrange for the Panel to meet with the Fresh Start team to discuss its recommendations prior to finalisation and presentation to the Minister.

Annex B: Key evidence

The panel has considered a range of evidence
With regard to the pilot programme.

A primary source has been the report
**‘Women in the Community: A formative pre/
post evaluation’, Dr Colm Walsh, April 2022.**
[Attached separately at Appendix i]

This evaluation broadly found that - This programme offers a distinct opportunity to understand and respond to the needs of women living in communities affected by ongoing paramilitarism and the legacy of conflict and contribute in a measurable way to the attainment of the benefits defined in the Tackling Paramilitarism and Organised Crime plan.

Data from this formative pre-post evaluation illustrate the complexity of needs affecting these women and placing some at greater risk of paramilitary harm and exploitation. In particular, there were elevated rates of interpersonal trauma, significant challenges in regard to education and employment, elevated rates of mental health and wellbeing issues, lower levels of community connectedness, reduced sense of personal safety, and a lack of confidence in policing to keep communities safe.

Despite the complexity of needs, the data demonstrates that across a range of areas

there was a significant impact in a relatively short period of time. Whilst interview data captured the requests from organisations to extend the implementation period, this evaluation suggests that gains can be achieved quickly and rather than extend the period, it could be prudent to facilitate a greater number of projects within the same time period.

These gains were particularly observed in regard to mental health, self-efficacy and collective efficacy, all of which are related to benefit 1 (increased resilience to paramilitarism and coercive control). There was also evidence of areas that the Programme Board, Department and delivery partners could consider as the programme is refined.

Another useful source of evidence was the report **‘Developing Women in the Community: Questionnaire response, 19 May 2022.’** [Attached separately at Appendix ii]

The panel commissioned a survey over a short period of time (9 May 2022 to 15 May 2022) to gather views of applicants to the Developing Women in the Community

Programme. Respondents provided feedback through an online survey. The report provides a useful overview of the responses provided.

Of the 36 organisations who applied to the Developing Women in the Community Programme, 19 completed the online questionnaire resulting in a response rate of 53%.

A range of questions were posed with regard to the application process, challenges experienced in establishing, running, and evaluating the programme, and the appetite of applicants to apply again.

In summary - A number of organisations commented on the success of the programme and the positive impact of the programme on its participants. Almost all respondents said that they would apply again to the programme with over half of respondents rating the application process as 'easy' (rating of 1) or 'quite easy' (rating of 2). A number of respondents found the timescales of the programme short and felt that any future programmes should be longer.

Another source of useful evidence and insight was a **Familiarisation meeting held on 23 March 2022** [summary readout attached separately at Appendix iii] where a number of Panel members met delivery organisations programme leads to discuss the impact the programme had at a grass roots level. Points of note from discussions:

- There were a breadth of benefits realised as a result of the programmes, which responded to specific local needs

- The programmes presented a significant opportunity for developing and enhancing networks and sharing learning
- There was a positive impact on the women involved in a short period of time and brought wider benefits that initially anticipated
- Women engaged in the programmes were keen to do more, building on what they had achieved/their successes

Also the **Perceptions of Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2017 to 2020**, published: 19 May 2022, has also provided the panel with useful insights into the current context in regards to paramilitarism across Northern Ireland.

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