

LCDP Survey Report

#2



**Community Workers'
Co-operative**

June 2011

Foreword

This is the second of a series of surveys undertaken by the Community Workers' Co-operative as part of a commitment to contribute to the development of policies, structures and programmes that support and enable quality community work. I want at the outset to congratulate the Community Workers' Co-operative for undertaking and producing these important and timely reports.

This second report builds on the report of the first survey carried out at the end of 2010/beginning of 2011. Both seek to provide insight into the Local and Community Development Programme, the primary programme through which community work is now resourced in Ireland. Both should be regarded as contributing to the evidence-based critique of the LCDP but need to be considered to be indicative rather than definitive. Unfortunately both indicate that the LCDP can do little to advance collective outcomes and empowerment for marginalised communities.

The LCDP provides what is referred to as 'a logic framework' for delivering change. The logic however is not apparent and the use of the term is in effect misleading. The defined goals of the LCDP and their associated funding weighting cannot deliver lasting, sustainable change towards equality, social justice and development for marginalised communities. Furthermore, both the LCDP framework, and in particular its weighting, constrains community work approaches to addressing poverty, social exclusion, inequality, rights denial and marginalisation.

The restructuring required for LCDP implementation involved the integration and assimilation of independent, autonomous local organisations into larger entities and is a retrograde step for active engagement in democratic processes. Such organisations provided an important opportunity well used in previous recessions for marginalised communities to engage meaningfully in decision-making.

The move of the LCDP to a different Department under a new Minister provides a timely and opportune chance to re-think the way forward in these challenging times. We encourage advise the Minister and his officials to take the opportunity to consult and gain the active participation of all the stakeholders, national and local in finding new and creative ways forward for community development.

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LCDP Survey Report

Introduction

This is the second in the series of surveys undertaken by the Community Workers' Co-operative (CWC) as part of the process of documenting developments in Irish community work. Organisations formerly funded under the Community Development Programme were invited to participate in a second brief survey in order to gather the most up-to-date information available on the process of LCDP implementation.

The questionnaire again asked a range of questions focusing on the stage of the process of implementation, the experience of the process and assessments of the Local and Community Development Programme. A total of 61 responses were received to the survey, though not all respondents answered every question. These results therefore report the total number of respondents to the question under discussion.

Background

In September 2008, the then Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs announced that the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) and the Community Development Programme (CDP) would be integrated in order to 'provide seamless social inclusion services to the most needy in Irish society'. It was further announced that a new Local and Community Development Programme would supersede both programmes. Designed by the Centre for Effective Services, the programme states that it seeks to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities. The LCDP is underpinned by four high-level goals:

- To promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services;
- To increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural development activities and resources;
- To increase peoples' work readiness and employment prospects; and
- To promote engagement with policy, practice and decision making processes on matters affecting local communities.

Significant anecdotal evidence suggests that there were considerable difficulties with the design and implementation requirements of the Local and Community Development Programme from the perspective of those engaged in community work. Despite this, most projects formerly funded under the Community Development Programme have been engaging in the integration model designed by then Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs or one of the alternative models that have been accepted by the Department since 2009. A small number of projects opted to remain independent of DCEGA funding.

The views represented here are not necessarily the views of the Community Workers' Co-operative.

¹ Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Press Release, Sep 18, 2009

Integration model - partial transfer of business ie CDP limited company still remains, only 2 CDP staff transferred.

Some Local inner city CDPs are meeting with a view to progressing a way forward in light of the fact that we do not have a Local Development Company at present.

Neither, we are being funded via Údarás and maintaining our own work plan and governance structures

We have amalgamated with 5 other CDPs in Limerick City to form one independent company with a service level agreement with PAUL

Remaining independent- Opted out of the LCDP in Dec 2010

CDP disbanded, offices closed, based full time in Partnership, transfer complete, company in process of winding up

Relocated as a 'Community Development Officer to another community area under the County Partnership

Asset Transfer completed on 13th April, 2011 and we were told that we would be issued with workplan, mobile phones and email address on 18th April, 2011 when officially transferred. We have not as yet received new workplan.

We have no formal information as to what will happen in the Dublin Inner City area so it is difficult to make any plans therefore

Survey results

Integration model:

The report of the first survey outlined that the majority (53%) of projects were integrating with their Local Development Company, with 28% working on an alternative model, and 19% pursuing neither model.

The second survey asked respondents to comment on/explain the model there are engaging with. The answers reflected the range of models that are currently in development. Some respondents stated that they were continuing to implement the model designed by the (now) Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. Of these, some are fully integrating and some are partially integrating, meaning that they will transfer the elements of the organisation funded by the LCDP but retain a company limited by guarantee structure to manage other facets of the organisation.

Others indicated that they were involved in one of the alternative models approved by the Department, including:

- The alternative model supported by the HSE in the south of the country;
- The Limerick model that sees the projects formerly funded under the Community Development Programme in Limerick merge into one organisation;
- The National Traveller Partnership model that will see the establishment of an organisation into which the majority of Traveller projects will partially or fully merge. The detail of this model is still being negotiated with Department officials;
- The Women's model that will see the majority of the former CDPs that are dedicated to working with women merge with the National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks;
- A small number of respondents stated that Údarás na Gaeltachta are administering their funding but they are not currently required to merge.

Many respondents engaged in these models described them as the "best worst" option as opposed to something that they believed was positive in its own right. A small number stated that they had opted out of the process altogether.

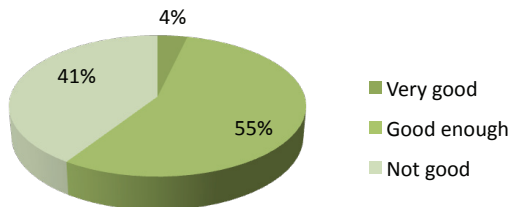
When asked to outline the stage of the process the organisation was currently at, the majority of respondents stated that the due diligence process had been completed and a joint planning exercise was either completed or underway with the LDC. Many of the organisations formerly funded under the Community Development Programme have closed down with their Boards of Management having disbanded. Others remain operational to manage other projects and programmes.

A range of difficulties were reported. For example, one stated that they had been reallocated to an area other than the area they covered under the Community Development Programme leaving an area of high disadvantage without a service. Another respondent stated that they had been told they would receive a work plan and be allocated email addresses etc but that these had yet to materialise. One project stated that they had been unable to draw down funding in 2011 as the Department had failed to make adequate arrangements to so do. Projects in the Dublin Inner City report facing particular challenges as there is currently no LDC in that area.

Experience of the integration process

Respondents integrating with their LDC were asked to choose from the options that which best describes their experience of the integration process. One respondent stated that they found the process to be very positive. Fifteen respondents stated that they found the process good enough and eleven respondents stated that their organisation has found the process very difficult.

Integration Process



Coping with the change was managed very well.

Response	N	%
Very good. My organisation has found the process to be positive	1	4%
Good enough. My organisation has found the process difficult but we are getting there	15	55%
Not good. My organisation has found the whole process very difficult	11	41%
Total	27	100%

The responses received to the request to elaborate on this were varied. A small number of respondents stated that the process was well managed. However, the vast majority of responses reported difficulties with the process. Some of these difficulties were at a principled level, questioning the motivation behind the 'political' decision to merge in the first place. Others stated that they believed that the process is detrimental to work to combat poverty and disadvantage.

Other, more practical difficulties were also reported. One respondent, for example, stated that confusion in relation to staff remains. Others indicated that the terms and conditions of staff had been altered. Others still stated that they had been assigned to other areas of work with little or no consultation. Some respondents noted what they considered to be a lack of support for the process and an absence of guidelines to support the process.

Our management committee posed no opposition to the merger, they were pleased to hand the workload over. The staff of both organisations weren't thrilled by the prospect of the merger, but we approached it as something we had to do and it has been completed amicably enough.

The process itself has been relatively smooth with only minor issues to date. However, the politics behind why we are forced to merge remains the fundamental problem.

emotionally it was very difficult for the CDP staff and co-ordinator - the LDC tried (and managed on some issues) to alter our terms and conditions of employment staff within the LDC seem to feel threatened by our inclusion within their company and no attempt has been made to do some 'team building'

We are experiencing confusion as to whether are staff remain in the CDP or are moved to take part in some of the Countywide work under the Partnership. Another concern is 'will coordinators' be made redundant as this could be perceived as another layer of management.

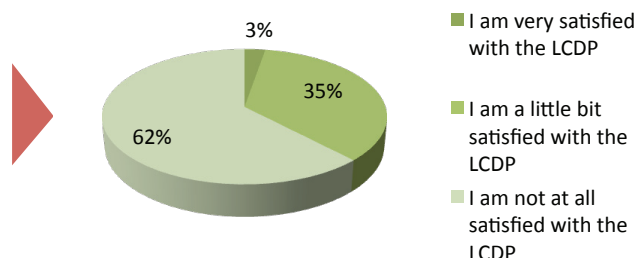
The process has been more like a takeover rather than a merger. The local voice has been written out of the process. The ethos and culture of the new entity continues to be a challenge when prioritising the work and issues identified in the community. The Comply or Die mentality is very evident, particularly from the LCDP manager.

No guidance from either Department, or Pobal. Money due to the organisation has not been transferred on agreed dates, slow process; staff went unpaid on a number of occasions.

Assessment of the Local and Community Development Programme

Now that the LCDP has been in the implementation phase for some months, respondents were asked to choose the option that best describes their overall opinion of the Local and Community Development Programme.

Local & Community Development programme



As can be seen from the graph and table above, only a small minority of respondents (1 or 3%) stated that they were very satisfied with the LCDP and believed it to be good for community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Thirteen or 35% respondents stated that they were a little bit satisfied with the LCDP and believe it has some merit and is somewhat good for community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. However, the majority (23 or 62%) stated that they were not at all satisfied with the LCDP, believing that it is detrimental to community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. The same question was asked of respondents in the first LCDP survey. The most recent responses show a deterioration in how the LCDP is perceived by many of those charged with its implementation.

When asked to elaborate on this, many respondents reflected the fact that the reality of working within the framework of the programme was beginning to sink in. Very few positive comments were made. A significant number of comments reflected the deep dissatisfaction that respondents feel about the programme and its potential for addressing poverty and social exclusion. Criticism centred on the programme goals, the weighting associated with the goals, as well as the loss of decision making opportunities for local, disadvantaged communities.

Many respondents criticised the programme for its emphasis on counting numbers rather than the impact or outcome of the work. The current framework assesses the numbers of those engaging in initiatives or interventions rather than the impact of the engagement – assessing output rather than outcome.

A number of respondents reported that community development

it has some merit if some changes were made to it

Response	LCDP Survey #1		LCDP Survey #2	
	N	%	N	%
I am very satisfied with the LCDP. I believe it is good for community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality	2	5%	1	3%
I am a little bit satisfied with the LCDP. I believe it has some merit and is somewhat good for community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality	20	47,5%	13	35%
I am not at all satisfied with the LCDP. I believe it is detrimental to community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality	20	47.5%	23	62%
Total	42	100%	37	100%

Much more limited programme in terms of trying to influence policy and make widespread changes in marginalised people's lives, more of a safe piecemeal programme. However, I believe there is merit in having specific programme indicators to work towards - I would change those indicators though.

The process has been an ideological attack on CD Work & participative democracy, designed to DISEMPOWER local marginalised communities from decision-making & control of projects & their work. The LCDP 4 goals & their relative prioritization are service orientated, sidelining advocacy & targeted at muzzling dissent & critical voice.

I do not believe that we can challenge the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion through the new programme. It will be controlled by the state and will not allow their policies to be overly criticised

.....When I argued that we were a service, and people were accessing us, we were told that we could continue working as we were but there would be no funding for us next year, I was told that 'Community

is not a priority for the LDC into which they have integrated with some stating that they had been explicitly told this. Some reported that they have been directed by the LDC to undertake work that is other than community work, with one being specifically told that "community development has no place in the new plan". Others stated that the removal of the right of people from the communities to make decisions has adversely affected participation and they believe this will ultimately have a detrimental impact on the work to address the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion.

There is a very definite move away from the grass roots which can only be detrimental to community work and communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. This movement towards 'streamlining' ultimately interferes with decision-making at a local level it takes away one of our key strengths – "our capacity to assist people in identifying and responding to their own needs". There is no doubt that by undermining the independence and autonomy within local communities there have been reductions in local involvement, participation and ownership. There will be adverse consequences not only for local projects, but also for a range of other measures and programmes that rely upon the engagement of relevant target groups. The new programme and our incorporation larger centralized local development companies is in my opinion a retrograde step.

Removal of core work regarding capacity building and community participation, a one size fits all approach, the evidence based approach that relies on figures that don't necessarily fit with the work, the weighting of the goals, the lack of understanding of multi-funded groups and their needs, the lack of community management, lack of coherence at a national, regional and local level...

It does not actively engage with the socially excluded and marginalised at ground level. There is a real fear that this grouping will be left behind

We have a great staff team and we are working very well together. However we feel constrained by having to fit within certain boxes and the emphasis on numbers rather than the quality of the work.

Impact of the LCDP

Respondents were asked to comment on the overall impact the LCDP - programme and structure - on their work, staff team and organisation. The majority of responses reflected a frustration with the process where valuable time and resources are committed but benefits to the community in which/with which the organisation is working are less visible.

Respondents reported that their work has directly been negatively impacted. Many stated that the LCDP goals do not allow for community development to address poverty and social exclusion with one respondent describing it as having to "shoe-horn" the work into the goals laid down by the programme.

Many also mentioned the effect on the members of the Boards of Management stating that it had been de-motivating and demoralising for them, with one respondent describing the LCDP as "further marginalising" the community members that made up the management committee.

Those who commented on the effect on the organisation used words such as "devastating", "destroyed" and "obliterated".

A lot of time has been taken up with the process which has resulted in no real time for staff and management to look at work planning and priorities. It has been a demotivational experience on staff as we have been working without focus. The voluntary management have also disengaged and we have a good bit of work to do around re-energizing the group to take on the role of advisory group.

More paper work. More reports. More accountability. More stress. More mistrust. More planning. More pressure. LESS TIME TO CARRY OUT THE WORK.

The impact on the organisation is devastating. It is a shell of its former self. It has no real connection to a lot of the work as its function now is to manage a community employment scheme. While we have gained and lost board members - I see the organisation as a shell waiting for the wind to change and get core funding again to recommence their own work.

Suggestions for strengthening the LCDP

Respondents were asked to draw on their experience of LCDP implementation to make suggestions for how community work and work to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality can be strengthened in the LCDP. Several of the responses reflected the despondency that many of those working under the LCDP are experiencing, with comments such as, "At this point in time I honestly don't know". However, there were a few suggestions including:

- By placing more of an emphasis on community work within the strategic plans, the emphasis at the moment is on service delivery of education and training.
- Community Development and Social inclusion need to be set explicitly as priorities within the LCDP programme and the Goals, objective and indicators need to reflect more Community Development & Social Inclusion work, outcomes and impacts
- Provision of services and educational and employment opportunities are important but the identification of root causes and structural inequalities must be recognised as part of the work. People affected by the issues must be encouraged and supported to identify problems and the solutions.
- Real consultation with CDPs and giving these organisations back some decision making powers in relation to the development of the programme.
- The 10/40/40/10 split between goals diminishes importance of CDP work. This needs to be changed and priority needs to be given to local input, volunteers need to be valued in this process. More emphasis on qualitative outcomes is needed
- The CDP Co-ordinator(s) should be given a role in managing the community work aspects of the LCDP
- Consideration should be given to support the amalgamation of the LDCs into Local Authority structures. A case for genuine, truly independent local Community Organisations can then be easier made.
- From an equality perspective the framework's indicators would need to be examined as the programme runs the danger of reinforcing existing equalities due to its quantitative measurement.

Conclusion

The first report in this series of surveys revealed the level of dissatisfaction with the programme that many of those working to implement the LCDP feel. It showed that a significant number of people engaged in community work with communities experiencing poverty, social exclusion and inequality do not believe that the Local and Community Development Programme will serve these communities well. This first survey revealed that the loss of autonomy and opportunities for communities affected by poverty, social exclusion and inequality to direct and manage the work is particularly problematic.

This second survey attempts to capture and reflect the experiences of many of those engaged in implementing the LCDP six months later. This report captures and. It is clear from the survey that perceptions of the LCDP have deteriorated as the implementation phase has progressed. Though not unanimous, the majority view is that the programme itself does not facilitate community work to address poverty and social exclusion and the loss of autonomy and participation of individuals and communities in which the projects work is having a significantly negative impact. Far from creating a neat landscape, the arrangements that now exist, and the fact that a significant number of projects remain unaware of their future, continues to cause confusion and uncertainty about the future.

These two surveys contributes to the evidence that community work approaches to addressing poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage are not possible within the current LCDP framework – programme, structures and funding allocations. There is a significant argument to be made for a substantial redesign of the LCDP or the removal of community work from the LCDP and the establishment of a separate programme that would enable community work to be used as a sustainable methodology against poverty and social exclusion. A redesign or the design of a new programme should be based on credible consultations with those engaged in community development at all levels. Goals should be clearly focused on the reduction of poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage through community work methodologies, as opposed to focusing on increasing awareness of services or access to education or employment as they currently are. There is also a strong argument from both an economic and democratic perspective that autonomy and independence of local projects be restored.

It is the stated purpose of the CWC to support and promote quality community work. To this end the CWC commits to constructive engagement with the Department and other stakeholders to create the conditions for this to happen. The process should not be onerous as those involved already have developed ideas of what type of programme would enable them to carry out the work effectively and efficiently.

¹See also <http://www.changingireland.blogspot.com/>