

# Pay, Conditions and HR Practices under Different Government Programmes in the Community Sector

Findings of New Research Undertaken for the  
Dublin Employment Pact *Equal at Work* Project

Hibernian Consulting  
June 2007

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief outline of the key issues relating to how government funded programmes affect employers' ability to provide good pay, conditions and HR practices in the community sector. To date there has been little available evidence on these issues and in particular there has been limited comparison between the terms and conditions provided by different funding programmes in the sector.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to address this deficit this paper provides an initial insight into the situation of employers and employees in the sector. Drawing on the results of an original survey, it explores this issue alongside collecting the perspectives of the funders of these programmes (various Government Departments and Agencies).

The paper was commissioned by the community sector cluster of the Dublin Employment Pact's Equal at Work project. This part of the Equal at Work project aims to promote good practice and equality in relation to improved pay and conditions and other HR issues in the community sector. This paper represents one output from the work of the cluster<sup>2</sup>.

The focus of the research was on funding programmes that relate to social inclusion and labour market inclusion. This reflects the work of the wider Equal at Work project and the organisations involved in the project. The project is aware that many of the issues arising in the research are also relevant to the wider community and voluntary sector (e.g. to organisations with a sporting remit; or a cultural remit; or a remit linked to promotion of the Irish language etc.).

## 1.2 Research Method Used

To facilitate data collection for this paper, two questionnaires were developed to allow interviews to take place over the telephone. The first was created to collect information from employers in the community sector. Twelve employers who received funding under seven selected funding schemes were interviewed. The second questionnaire was developed to collect information from senior officials in the Government departments and agencies that funded these selected programmes. A list of these schemes, departments and agencies is provided at the start of section 3. The questionnaires are attached in annex A.

The research was undertaken during March and April 2007 with preliminary findings presented to an Equal at Work seminar on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007. Feedback received at that seminar and subsequently from members of the community sector cluster of Equal at Work was taken into account in finalising the paper<sup>3</sup>.

## 1.3 Structure of the Paper

Following this introduction, the paper provides a brief overview of the community sector in Ireland. It then lists the programmes, groups and government departments/agencies examined before reporting on five issues that emerged from the analysis. Collectively these issues highlight a number of inconsistencies, problems and deficits across the sector. Finally the paper summarises its conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> For a previous study see Equal at Work (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Further information on the Dublin Employment Pact and on the Equal at Work project is available at [www.dublinpact.ie](http://www.dublinpact.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Hibernian Consulting would particularly like to thank Jean Somers of the Dublin Employment Pact for her support in preparing the paper.

## 2. The Community Sector in Ireland

### 2.1 Overview of Sector

The important role played by the Community sector in Ireland has been highlighted in a number of reports. The 2000 Government White Paper on the relationship between the state and the sector noted that “an active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised and participative structures and fosters a climate in which the quality of life can be enhanced for all”. Similarly, the 2006 National Economic and Social Council Strategy, entitled *People, Productivity and Purpose*, stressed the need for “healthy community and voluntary organisations” as “an important requirement for overall economic and social development”. Reflecting similar sentiments, the national partnership agreement *Towards 2016* states that “the Government recognises that community and voluntary activity forms the very core of a vibrant and inclusive society”. To further exploit these benefits, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship committed itself in 2007 to adopting policy initiatives to further the growth, development and participation-in these organisations.

Despite this belief that the community and voluntary sector is valuable, there is no consensus on its definition in Ireland. While reviewing the sector in Ireland for a 1990 study, Faughnan noted the diversity of community and voluntary organisations such that she believed the sector “defies precise description and lacks clear boundaries”. In its 2000 White Paper, the Government concluded that “a pragmatic approach to the issue of the definition of the sector is necessary, given the range of Departments and agencies that engage in relationships with a wide range of Community and Voluntary organisations at different levels”(2000:52).

4 Across Ireland, the Centre for Nonprofit Management (CNM) in Trinity College, estimates that there are almost 25,000 non-profit organisations. The non-profit definition used by the CNM is broader than the community and voluntary sector as it includes all non-profit bodies. Therefore this definition includes some hospitals, hospices and education providers. However, of the organisations identified by the CNM, the majority are likely to be community and voluntary organisation. A previous study by Hibernian Consulting for Equal at Work (Nov, 2006) identified that the community sector (i.e. organisations working primarily to promote social inclusion) employed approximately 50,000 people in Ireland.

The precise monetary value of the community and voluntary sector to the Irish economy is difficult to gauge. To date, lack of data on the sector has limited the number of investigations of its economic value. The most commonly cited source detailing the sector’s economic size is a report produced in 1999 by Donoghue et al entitled *Uncovering the Nonprofit Sector in Ireland*. In that report, the authors break out the Community and Voluntary sector from the broader non-profit sector and estimate values for its economic role. In that report they found that the community and voluntary sector accounted for 2.14% of GDP and 2.4% of GNP in that year. This would be equivalent to between €2.5 and €3 billion in today’s terms. If Dublin is estimated to possess a 25% share of this, this would amount to an economic value of the community and voluntary sector in Dublin of over €600 million.

### 2.2 Commitments in the White Paper of 2000

In 2000, the government published its White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector. In his Foreword to the White Paper, the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs stated that the publication “marks a fundamental change in official attitudes to support for Community and Voluntary groups.” The White Paper sets out the Government’s recognition of the role of the sector (in a wide range of areas) and sets out how the government should interact with the sector.

In relation to training needs in the sector, the White Paper recognises (page 33) the need for “management and organisational development and personal/ professional development of staff”.

Under the heading ‘Comprehensiveness of Funding Lines’, Paragraphs 5.26 and 5.27 of the White Paper state:

“5.26 The ‘package’ of funding supports under particular schemes is often incomplete. While funding for the primary service which a funder wants to support and a voluntary organisation wants to provide can be available, other funding necessary to the effectiveness of the organisation might not be available. For example, to be effective, and to deliver value for money for the funder and a good service for the customer/client, Community and Voluntary organisations need to undertake staff training, management training and development, service evaluation and organisational reviews. These require resources. Where statutory agencies fund the delivery of particular services or activities, individual schemes should make provision to meet such training and development needs.

5.27 It needs to be made explicit that funding schemes provide a comprehensive funding package – and not just funding for direct service provision – for any activity for which a statutory funder accepts responsibility. Such would include funding for necessary training and support of volunteers, for example, who deliver the service in question.”

In relation to the complications caused by multiple funding sources, these are acknowledged. For example, page 141 states: “The maze of agencies and funds leads to frustration and delays for community groups in applying to various sources for support for individual pieces of work” and calls for “greater synergy and co-ordination” in this regard.

The White Paper also states (page 30) that “Government Departments and agencies will adhere to the best practice guidelines ... as set out in Appendix 3”. Appendix 3 of the White Paper is entitled ‘Good practice standards for the statutory sector’. Among the good practice points set out are the following:

- ▼ All statutory agencies should review their arrangements for awarding grants to community and voluntary groups with a view to streamlining their administrative procedures ...;
- ▼ In providing funding to community and voluntary organisations who provide an agreed, priority service on behalf of, or in partnership with a statutory agency, the Government’s approach will be to provide an agreed budget adequate to meet the staffing and other costs of the service, including adherence to high standards of care and service to customers. The budget should also be adequate for the provision of reasonable working conditions and salary levels for the employment of such staff as are agreed to deliver the service, including adherence to national wage agreements and provision for appropriate pension arrangements

### 3. Issues for Employers in the Community Sector

The data in this section derives from interviews with twelve community organisations in the greater Dublin area and six government officials<sup>4</sup>. The identity of respondents has been protected by only referring to them using labels associated with the programme under which they receive funding. These programmes are:

- ▼ The Community Development Projects (CDP) — 2 organisations interviewed
- ▼ The Equality for Women Measure (EWM) — 2 organisations interviewed
- ▼ The Family Resource Centres (FRC) — 2 organisations interviewed
- ▼ The Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme (EOCP)<sup>5</sup> — 2 organisations interviewed
- ▼ Community Employment Supervisors (CE sup) — 2 organisations interviewed
- ▼ Community Employment Participants (CE part) — 1 organisation interviewed
- ▼ The Dormant Accounts Programme (Dor a/c) — 1 organisation interviewed

Officials in funding Government departments and agencies were also interviewed. These included officials in:

- ▼ Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs — CDP and Dormant accounts programmes
- ▼ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform — EWM
- ▼ Department of Social and Family Affairs — FRCs
- ▼ Office of the Minister for Children — EOCP
- ▼ FÁS — CE programmes

Where appropriate, interviews also occurred with officials in Pobal, as an intermediary organisation.

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Issues that emerged are outlined below with tables presenting the main findings from the community organisation interviews and commentary incorporating the views of both community organisations and government officials.

#### 3.1 Issue 1: Employee Costs, Wages and Pensions

As shown in table 3.1, community sector organisations reported that an element of the funding they receive is specifically ring-fenced for employee costs. In general this represented a percentage of the funding allocation or was an amount deemed appropriate for the employment costs of a set number of workers. This proportion was generally agreed by the organisation being funded with the funding department or agency through, or as a result of, the application process under the relevant programme or scheme (although there may be broad guidelines as to what this percentage should be).

Table 3.1: If a portion of the funding received is 'ring-fenced' to cover employee costs (wages and entitlements)							
	CDP	EWM	FRC	EOCP	CE sup	CE part	Dor a/c
Element of funding ring-fenced for employee costs (as per funding application)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>4</sup> Given the scope of the research, the paper does not claim to be definitive or comprehensive. However, its aim was to identify the kinds of issues that arise for employers in the community sector as regards pay, conditions and other HR issues. Further research would be useful to define these in more detail.

<sup>5</sup> Funding under the EOCP will end in December-2007 and subsequent funding will be under the National Childcare Investment Programme. A value for money report on the EOCP is also expected later in 2007. This research report reflects the situation in April 2007.

**Notes for all tables in section 3:**

- ✓ = item is provided / available
- x = item is not provided / not available
- blank = no answer from survey
- n/a = not applicable

Respondents noted that this practice may be beginning to change. For example, both of the CDPs interviewed noted that in the past there had been a specific percentage of funding allocated to employee costs but that these have recently become indicative rather than mandatory allocations.

A common theme arising from the survey responses was a reluctance on the part of Government departments to explicitly dictate salary levels. They consider their role to be that of programme funders rather than employers. In their view, it is the employer’s role to establish wage levels. When interviewed on this issue officials in Government departments responsible for funding these programmes noted that their programmes “are not employment measures” (EWM) and that “we are not the employer” (FRCs). Collectively, they reported their role to be that of providing block-grants to organisations which then use these funds to deliver an agreed service (subject to some terms and conditions e.g. staffing levels etc).

In some cases (e.g CDPs and FRCs) guideline wage figures are provided. However it was interesting to note that in the case of CDP(b) it found that it was already paying above the maximum point on these guidelines and a senior manager in the project commented that you: “just cannot get staff at this pay level”. It was also commented that while the funding departments are not the employers, they will sometimes take a close interest in the wage levels being paid by projects.

Table 3.2: Does your funding increase each year so that you can provide the following?										
	CDP		EWM		FRC		EOCP	CE sup	CE part	Dor a/c
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)				
Wage increases under partnership agreements	x	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x
Employer pension contributions	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x
Annual salary grade increments	✓	x	n/a	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	x

Where there is some continuity between employee wages in the government funded programmes examined and wages elsewhere, it emerges ‘unofficially’ through the process of submitting proposals and tenders where organisations calculated employee costs on the basis of their own internal wage scales or by using the salary scales of comparable workers in the public sector.

Three issues related to employee earnings are examined in table 3.2. It reports replies from community sector employers as regards whether they received increases in their annual budgets to reflect additional employee costs.

Both across programmes and within individual programme types, the survey found different outcomes. Where differences exist within programmes, these appear to emerge due to differences in the applications for funding. For example, in the case of both the EWM(b) and FRC(b), increases are provided as they built their costs into their original funding application. Such a process is not easy to implement, particularly in the context of applications from small community groups, longer multi-annual periods of funding, lack of clarity with regard to future national pay increases and competing tenders for service provision.

The Government officials interviewed noted that it would be inappropriate to explicitly grant such funding increases as they do not deal with salaries and are not the employers. They also indicated that their ability to grant such increases was tied to their own budgets and to the annual estimates process.

The implications for organisations of this situation varies. In particular, the operators of the EOCPs reported that they received a fixed budget (annually over three-years) and that no additional departmental funding was made for such increases. In the case of EOCP(a) the project has coped with this situation through not giving staff pay increases. It reported that last year was the first time in three years that staff received a wage increase and to pay for this increase additional fundraising was engaged in. It was also noted that the absence of any funding increases on a year-on-year basis means that smaller organisations, who cannot lean on local communities to pay for extras, have to either cut back services or charge parents more.

Reflecting the findings in table 3.2, a further issue highlighted by a number of community sector employers related to situations where organisations have multiple schemes and multiple funders. For example, the CDP(b), FRC(a) and EOCP(a) all noted that there can be situations where one person is entitled to a wage increase or an increment and their colleagues, funded under a different programme, are not. This can cause difficulties from an employer’s perspective. Often community organisations depend on the understanding of their employees to resolve such situations.

### 3.2 Issue 2: Training and Entitlements

To assess the presence, or absence, of some further elements of standard employee pay and conditions, the survey examined if community sector employers receive funding to cover training and standard entitlements. In general, programmes are not provided with specific funds (as part of their core budget) to provide staff training, continuous professional development, external supervision or health and safety training. They also do not receive funding to provide entitlements such as enhanced paid maternity leave if required.

	CDP	EWM		FRC	EOCP	CE sup	CE part	Dor a/c
		(a)	(b)					
Staff Training / C.P. Development	x		✓	x	x	x	✓	x
External Supervision/ access to Professionals	x		x	x	x	x		x
Health and Safety training	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Enhanced paid maternity leave	x	x		x	x	x		

Different Government funding programmes for the Community sector have different ways of dealing with the lack of such funds. In some cases, such as the FRCs, there is a possibility of applying for extra funding to provide staff training. The FRCs and the CDPs may also be able to receive training from regional support agencies set up to support these programmes (either face-to-face training or information provided via websites) in a range of areas<sup>6</sup>. In other cases, applicant organisations incorporate an amount into their budget to pay for employee training. For example, EWM(a) indicated that it generally adds 19.5% to its funding application amount to cover costs associated with issues such as staff training. In other cases again, these items are considered ‘luxuries’ and both EOCPs interviewed indicated that they would have to engage in additional fundraising to provide these opportunities for their employees.

<sup>6</sup> As well as having regional support agencies, the CDPs and FRCs also receive support from specialist support agencies, e.g. Women’s Aid, Pavee Point, Blue Drum (on the arts) and others

These findings suggest that, across the community sector, levels of training and career development practices are patchy. Where they are available, their provision does not depend on core-funding but is reliant on additional successful funding applications (not always guaranteed), either under the same programme or via funding obtained under a different programme. Alternatively, these needs may have been successfully foreseen and funding secured during the funding application process.

### 3.3 Issue 3: Other Human Resource (HR) Activities

Given that the individual projects surveyed for this paper are required to employ people (both as a condition of funding and to perform their tasks), a series of questions were asked regarding the provision of funds within the programme budget to cover the costs of six standard HR items/practices.<sup>7</sup> Table 3.4 outlines these findings and shows that, in almost all cases, the community sector organisations interviewed said that the budget for the programme did not contain specific funding to cover the relevant HR items/practices.

	CDP	EWM	FRC	EOCP	CE sup	CE part	Dor a/c
recruitment costs	x	✓	x	x	x		x
staff communications	x	x	x	x	x		x
costs for personnel handbooks / manuals	x	x	x	x	x		x
dealing with disputes	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
staff appraisals / reviews	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
reviews of HR practices	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

In response the organisations interviewed indicated that they dealt with this situation in a number of ways. In the case of the CDPs and FRCs respondents indicated that they could apply for a separate grant to provide these HR items and (as mentioned with training), there may be separate support available from dedicated regional support agencies<sup>8</sup>. However, they also pointed out that this involved additional paper work and administration to secure the funds. There is also no guarantee that such a funding application will succeed – projects said that this may depend on the time of the year, the availability of funds in departmental budgets among other things.

In the case of EWM(a) the organisation reported that it had incorporated a provision for HR activities into its original funding application and has used that amount to fund some (but not all) of the items examined in the survey (e.g. recruitment). The other EWM indicated that it was fortunate to be located within a larger organisation where it can draw upon resources elsewhere in that organisation to provide these HR items when needed.

One organisation, CDP(a), indicated that the lack of funding for HR practices has impacted upon its ability as an employer. It suggested that poor HR practices have caused trouble in retaining staff and suggested that employers in the sector require training in HR issues such as dealing with personnel problems, including bullying.

CE supervisors also reported that although they are employees, they often have to deal with various HR issues and have no training to do so. In particular, as the labour market has improved, CE schemes have re-focused on more marginalised participants. Respondents said they have “nobody to turn to” if

<sup>7</sup> These were identified using Gunnigle et al (2002) *Human Resource Management in Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

<sup>8</sup> The CDPs and the FRCs may also receive part-financing of their recruitment costs

they need help with difficult participants. One of the CE supervisors interviewed suggested that there should be some type of “back-up” or “available assistance” provided.

When asked about the provision of funds for HR issues, officials in the funding departments expressed a reluctance to do this as it is employee related and they do not see themselves as the employers (and therefore do not see themselves as having these responsibilities). However, some did point towards the additional grants for which projects could apply. One official said that, while funds for HR issues were not provided as part of core funding, there is an expectation that the organisations who receive this funding are legal entities and they should be providing standard employee terms and conditions.

Overall the findings suggest that there is limited focus on the provision of HR activities when core-funding is being allocated. HR issues are essentially seen as an optional add-on without secure lines of funding. Such an approach is likely to lead to poor HR practices.

### 3.4 Issue 4: Wider Conditions of Employees in Community Sector

As a way of summarising the situation of employees in the community sector, the survey asked a series of questions to employers with regard to the terms and conditions of their employees. The answers to these questions are provided in table 3.5 for the organisations surveyed. A benchmark comparison is also shown, representing the standard terms and conditions of employment as experienced by civil servants (CS).

Table 3.5: Are your employees entitled to / do they experience the following?													
	CS	CDP		EWM		FRC		EOCP		CE sup		CE part	Dor a/c
		(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)		
permanent job security	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
annual increments / pay grades	✓	x	x	n/a	✓	x	✓	x		✓	✓	x	✓
clear career progression path	✓	x	x	n/a	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	n/a
pension provision	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x
allowed union membership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
travel and subsistence benefits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	x	✓	✓	n/a	n/a
annual leave	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
annual leave flexibility	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
flexi-time	✓		x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓		✓
job-sharing	✓		✓	n/a	x	n/a	✓	n/a	✓	x	x		x
career breaks	✓	x		n/a	x	n/a	✓	x	n/a	x	x		n/a
paid study leave	✓		✓		x	x	✓	x		x	x		n/a
funding for relevant educ. courses	✓		✓			x	✓	x	x	x	x		n/a
employment contracts	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
staff development / training	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x		✓

Where there are differences between organisations funded through programmes of the same type, the survey found that these arise because the operator of these schemes has sourced funds elsewhere (fundraising etc) to complement core programme funding and has used this to enhance employee conditions. There may also be different approaches taken by different project management committees. This means that employees funded under the same programme but in different locations may experience different working terms and conditions. The ability to raise extra funding is often dictated by the size of the organisation (larger groups have more capacity to do this) or their location (e.g. near local businesses who are willing to sponsor schemes in the local community).

One reflection of the impact of these terms and conditions was provided by a senior official at FRC(a). She indicated that the current situation was restrictive in terms of:

1. job security
2. professional recognition (through pay levels and grades)
3. career progression
4. lack of career breaks

and that in the case of her institution these restrictions meant that no staff member stayed employed for longer than five years in the centre.

The survey also offered an interesting insight into the difficulties of providing enhanced terms and conditions in the community sector. An official at the CDP(b) indicated that in recent years it had to reduce some of the terms and conditions it offered to employees because the funding the programme received did not allow them to sustain these conditions. These included reducing the number of paid sick days and stopping the provision of enhanced paid maternity leave.

Overall, as table 3.5 shows, there remains a large gap between the terms and conditions of employees in the community sector and employees in the public sector. Amongst the many comments made by the individual projects, one (CDP(b)) noted that there is “a real need” to improve the terms and conditions of workers in the sector. Ideally, these workers should receive the “key terms and conditions” of public sector workers. Achieving this would mark a “major step forward”. Similarly, CDP(a) commented that there is a need for an agreed set of terms and conditions for workers in the community sector and that in the process of establishing this, the sector might also move towards an agreed pay scale.

### **3.5 Issue 5: Funding and Reporting Requirements**

A final issue raised by the projects surveyed relates to the nature of the funding they currently receive and in particular the difficulties attached to reporting to their funders. As table 3.6 shows, almost all the programmes examined had multiple funding sources – generally between 3 and 5 main funders. In every case of multiple funders, the project officials reported that there was an absence of similar reporting and timing mechanisms.

One respondent (CDP(b)) commented that “there is not one jot of co-ordination” between the various funders. This generates a huge amount of administrative work and overall the system as it stands is highly “inefficient” and as such “the management of grants is hugely complex”. Reflecting this, a manager with the EOCP(a) project indicated that the different requirements mean “we have to see our accountant at least four times per year” (for Pobal EOCP funding). “Why could it not be once a year?” She further noted that the reporting system as it currently stands is “costing us money and time that we don’t have”. Another respondent (FRC(b)) said that “the sector is crippled with red tape”.

Table 3.6: Nature of funding and reporting for community programmes									
	CDP	EWM		FRC	EOCP		CE sup	CE part	Dor a/c
		(a)	(b)		(a)	(b)			
Calendar year funding	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Overall, multiple funding sources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
Similar reporting timings and mechanisms	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓		x

In the context of the different demands imposed on community sector organisations by different public bodies, the comments from a group in receipt of funding from the dormant accounts fund proved insightful. It contrasted its experience of receiving funding from public and private sources. As regards reporting content and criteria they reported that “private donors require very little (key) information while the public sector requires lots”.

A common conclusion reached by all the respondents noted the need for some uniformity to be brought to these reporting requirements. They suggested that this would involve some uniform form and format of reporting with one reporting date which would be acceptable to all funding bodies<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> A wider issue, outside the scope of this paper, was noted in a 2007 document prepared by Framework, the agency supporting the CDPs and the FRCs in the South-East region. It stated that programmes can be based on different principles, e.g. some programmes may not fit easily with social inclusion principles or practices.

## 4. Conclusions

Based on the research findings presented in section 3, a number of conclusions emerge from the analysis in this paper. These are:

- ▼ Government officials consider their role to be one of providing block-grants to organisations that then use these funds to deliver an agreed service (subject to some terms and conditions e.g. staffing levels etc) rather than one of being employers. As such, they do not see themselves as having the responsibilities of employers. In their view it is the role of the community sector organisation or project to establish wage levels, budget for other entitlements and provide HR activities. This is generally done through the application process for funding – as such, applications may contain different levels of salary for workers undertaking similar tasks in different organisations or in different parts of the country.<sup>10</sup>
- ▼ Where possible departments were willing to support good practice in the sector through additional funding grants, however these were not guaranteed as they were tied to the availability of funds and to the exchequer estimates process. There were indications that some community sector organisations did access such funding in specific instances.
- ▼ There are inconsistencies across programme types in terms of the employment conditions offered to employees in the community sector. Some programmes receive annual funding increases so that they can provide wage increases, pensions and grade increments while others are in receipt of fixed funding and are unable to provide these.
- ▼ A particular problem for employers emerges in organisations where there are multiple schemes/programmes and multiple funding departments/agencies. There can be situations where one employee is entitled to a wage increase or an increment and their colleagues, funded under a different programme, are not. Often community organisations depend on the understanding of their employees to resolve the situation.
- ▼ Across the community sector, levels of training and career development practices are patchy. Where they are available their provision does not depend on core-funding but is reliant on either additional successful funding applications (not always guaranteed) or successfully foreseeing and securing funding for these needs during the funding application process.
- ▼ There is limited focus on the provision of HR activities when core-funding is being allocated. HR issues such as staff communications, the production of personnel handbooks and staff appraisals are essentially seen as an optional add-on without secure lines of funding. Such an approach is likely to inevitably lead to poor HR practices and produces a patchy distribution of HR activities across the sector.
- ▼ There remains a large gap between the terms and conditions of employees in the community sector and employees in the public sector. Employers noted that workers in the sector should receive the “key terms and conditions” of public sector workers and that in the process of establishing this, the sector might also develop and implement an agreed pay scale.
- ▼ A common conclusion reached by all the employers noted the need for some uniformity to be brought to the reporting requirements they must meet to avail of government funding. They suggested that this would involve some uniform form and format of reporting with just one reporting date which would be acceptable to all funding bodies.

In most cases these conclusions imply that HR practices in the community sector are inconsistent and fall short of the vision set out by the government’s White Paper some years ago.

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<sup>10</sup> Further information could be gathered from a future study of these application forms and processes.

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# Annex A: Questionnaires for Telephone Interviews

## A.1 Questionnaire for Community Organisations

Organisation name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Programme type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

### Q1. Is the funding that you receive:

Q1a. From one or multiple sources? \_\_\_\_\_  
if multiple, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Q1b. Is this funding received:  
on an annual basis  
on a multi-annual basis  
on a project-only basis  
mixture of the above (if so, indicate % breakdown)

Q1c. Is this funding received on a calendar-year basis?  
Yes, in all cases  
No  
Mixture (establish how this functions)

Q1d. If you have more than one funder, are the reporting timings and mechanisms for these funders the same (i.e. can you produce just one set of accounts etc...)

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If no, do they:  
differ by date  
differ by requirement/criteria  
differ by content

What are the differences: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q2. With regard to the nature of this funding:** does it contain an element that is specifically 'ring fenced' to cover employee costs (e.g. wages and entitlements)?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**Q2b.** If yes, is the funding amount established in the context of specified salary grades?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**Q3. Does the budget for the programme contain specific funds to cover any of the following:**

	Yes	No
(i) Staff Training / Continuous Professional Development		
(ii) External Supervision / access to professionals (where appropriate)		
(iii) Health and Safety Training		
(iv) Enhanced paid maternity leave		
(v) Administrative support		

**Q4. Where the budget is multi-annual, or where the funding is renewed on an annual basis, does the budget adjust annually to accommodate/facilitate:**

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	Yes	No
(i) Wage increases under national partnership agreements		
(ii) Employers pension contributions		
(iii) Annual salary grade increments		

If no (to any or all), how do you address this issue?

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**Q5. Does the budget for the programme contain specific funds to cover any of the following Human Resource practices:**

	Yes	No
(i) Recruitment costs (including advertising)		
(ii) Staff communications		
(iii) Costs of producing personnel and employee handbooks (if appropriate)		
(iv) Dealing with disputes		
(v) Appraisal, review and staff performance mechanisms		
(vi) Reviews of HR practices		

If no (to any or all), how do you address this issue?

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**Q6. Bringing together a series of issues, are your employees entitled to/do they experience the following:**

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1 permanent job security			
2 annual increments/paygrades			
3 clear career progression paths			
4 pension provision			
5 allowed union membership			
6 travel and subsistence benefits			
7 annual leave			
8 annual leave flexibility			
9 flexi-time			
10 job-sharing			
11 career-breaks			
12 paid study leave			
13 funding for relevant education courses			
14 employment contracts			
15 staff development/training			

**Q7. Finally,**

**Q7a.** Does the nature of the funding you receive restrict you in providing enhanced terms and conditions of employment for your employees?

Yes \_\_\_      No \_\_\_

If yes, how:

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**Q7b.** Do you have difficulty getting and retaining staff because of these restrictions (if any)?

Getting \_\_\_\_\_      Retaining \_\_\_\_\_

**Q7c.** Do you think there is room for improving the current system of funding such that it takes into account these issues of employee costs and HR practices?

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**Q7d.** In your opinion, how could these improvements be achieved? (where appropriate)

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## A.2 Questionnaire for Funding Departments / Agencies

Programme type:  
Contact information:

### Q1. Is the funding that you provide:

- on an annual basis
- on a multi-annual basis
- on a project-only basis

### Q2. With regard to the nature of this funding: does it contain an element that is specifically 'ring fenced' to cover employee costs (e.g. wages and entitlements)?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

### Q2b. If yes, is the funding amount established in the context of specified salary grades?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

### Q3. Does the budget for the programme contain specific funds to cover any of the following:

	Yes	No
(i) Staff Training / Continuous Professional Development		
(ii) External Supervision / access to professionals (where appropriate)		
(iii) Health and Safety Training		
(iv) Enhanced paid maternity leave		
(v) Administrative support		

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### Q4. Where the budget is multi-annual, or where the funding is renewed on an annual basis, does the budget adjust annually to accommodate/facilitate:

	Yes	No
(i) Wage increases under national partnership agreements		
(ii) Employers pension contributions		
(iii) Annual salary grade increments		

**Q5. Does the budget for the programme contain specific funds to cover any of the following Human Resource practices:**

	Yes	No
(i) Recruitment costs (including advertising)		
(ii) Staff communications		
(iii) Costs of producing personnel and employee handbooks (if appropriate)		
(iv) Dealing with disputes		
(v) Appraisal, review and staff performance mechanisms		
(vi) Reviews of HR practices		

**Q6. Finally,**

**Q6a.** Do you think there is room for improving the current system of funding such that it takes into account these issues of employee costs and HR practices?

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**Q6b.** In your opinion, how could these improvements be achieved? (where appropriate)

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