

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
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Purpose of Paper	3
1.2 Research Method Used	3
1.3 Structure of the Paper	3
2. The Community Sector in Ireland	4
2.1 Overview of Sector	4
2.2 Commitments in the White Paper of 2000	4
3. Issues for Employers in the Community Sector	6
3.1 Issue 1: Employee Costs, Wages and Pensions	6
3.2 Issue 2: Training and Entitlements	8
3.3 Issue 3: Other Human Resource (HR) Activities	9
3.4 Issue 4: Wider Conditions of Employees in Community Sector	10
3.5 Issue 5: Funding and Reporting Requirements	11
4. Conclusions	13
References	14
Annex A: Questionnaires for Telephone Interviews	15
A.1 Questionnaire for Community Organisations	15
A.2 Questionnaire for Funding Departments / Agencies	19

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.¹

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 cluster².

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 17th 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 paper³.

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.

¹ For a previous study see Equal at Work (2004).

² Further information on the Dublin Employment Pact and on the Equal at Work project is available at www.dublinpact.ie

³ 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.

