

PPN National Advisory Group

Date/Time: Wednesday 10 June 2020, 14.30hrs.

Venue: Skype via Department of Rural and Community Development, Conference Room, 5th Floor, Trinity Point, 10-11 Leinster Street South, Dublin 2, D02 EF85.

Minutes

Attendees:

Pillar Representatives:

- Seán Healy (Social Inclusion Pillar).
- Catherine Lane (C&V Pillar).
- Michael Ewing, (Environment pillar),

PPN Volunteers:

- Aileen Eglinton (Dún Laoghaire Rathdown PPN; C&V representative),
- Bibiana Savin (South Dublin PPN; Social Inclusion representative),
- Terrence Mc Donough (Galway City Community Network; Environmental representative)

PPN Resource Workers:

- Helen Howes (Wicklow PPN),
- Avril Wilson (Tipperary PPN)
- Sarah Wetherald (Sligo).

CCMA Representatives:

- Rebecca Loughrey, (Cork City Council),

Department of Rural and Community Development:

- Ciara Bates (Chair), Deirdre Kearney, Niall Hayden, Elaine Jennings, Caoimhín Ó Tuathail, Alan Monks.

Apologies:

- Alan Farrell (Galway County Council)

The Chair opened the meeting and began with introductions as there were some new additions to the Department's PPN team. The meeting was conducted through Skype due to the current restrictions as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

1. Adoption of Minutes.

The minutes of 12th Meeting of the Group held on 5th February 2020 were adopted.

2. Matters arising.

- On request, an update on DPER research (citizen engagement project) and copy of case study to be circulated. The final report is due to be presented to the Public Services Leadership Board and once approved, will be published on DPER website. DRCD to circulate ToR for original study.
- The return of signed copies of the NAG confidentiality agreement form was raised. It was requested that it be recirculated to the group.

3. Operation of PPN's during Covid-19

- DRCD outlined its work in highlighting the important role of PPNs during Covid 19. The PPN's work during the crisis was complemented and some fantastic examples of the work of PPNs were highlighted, noting examples from Fingal, Wicklow, and DLR among others.
- DRCD had requested information on how PPN's planned to continue operating during Covid-19, taking H&S issues into consideration and the response from PPNs is currently being compiled. There was a request for the DRCD's findings to be shared and it was confirmed they would be
- The Advisory Group discussed the varying experience of PPNs during the Community Call initiative and the perception of the role of PPN by other stakeholders. Concerns were raised that instead of using existing structures, the response to the Covid-19 emergency resulted in more ad-hoc structures being established in some cases. As a result, if a similar situation emerges again, it was agreed that consideration should be given to how best to mobilise existing structures.
- DRCD advised that local response teams were set up over a short timeframe based on instruction from D/Taoiseach and acknowledged points raised by the NAG. DRCD intends to examine the lessons learnt from Covid 19 in terms of PPN engagement with other stakeholders including local authorities. DHPLG to review the Community Call initiative which DRCD Social Inclusion Section will feed into. NAG requested to input into this review also.

4. Engagement with Local Authorities-

- Louise Purcell from DHPLG joined the meeting to update NAG on proposed review of SPC guidelines. A number of attendees outlined their experience in this regard. It was agreed that NAG members would provide their observations directly to Ms. Purcell whose contact details were to be circulated.
- DRCD updated the group about the Management Board meeting with the CCMA which provided useful two-way communication about the role of PPNs and their engagement with LAs. A further meeting between DRCD and the EECC scheduled for March was postponed due to Covid, No new date has been set.

5. Review of PPN Structure

- Discussion document circulated at previous meeting seeking feedback from NAG was discussed. No responses to date.
- First meeting of subgroup to be convened. In addition to those already signed up for the subgroup, DRCD invited any other NAG members to join the subgroup - Michael Ewing to join group.
- DRCD to draft TOR for review which subgroup will discuss at first meeting. Issues arising from Handbook review to be collated also and provided to the subgroup. When TOR are agreed by subgroup, they will be presented to the full NAG.

6. Subgroups

User Handbook

- DRCD advised that it consulted widely on the draft Handbook during 2019 and 2020. All responses compiled and forwarded to SJI. Next draft of Handbook expected towards end of June, which will then be circulated to NAG for information. Handbook to be published online with separate stakeholder sections (e.g. LAs, workers, secretariat, reps etc) and will also include appendices with templates for codes of conduct, MOUs, etc.
- This will be a living document which will be continuously kept under review.

Communications Strategy

- DRCD propose to seek tenders for multifaceted Communications Strategy to raise awareness of PPN amongst the public and improve communication between stakeholders, along with pamphlet on PPNs for wide distribution (VCs, libraries etc.). Request for Tender to be drafted and it is expected that tender will be awarded in Q3 2020.
- It is also proposed to organise an annual Awards ceremony for PPNs: 4/5 categories of awards which will be presented by the Minister at the Conference dinner. NAG were requested to provide input as to categories and how to assess applications.

NAG highlighted the importance of building on the Covid 19 momentum. In response to a proposal for the Department to supply material for a more locally based campaign in advance of the Communications Strategy, the Department confirmed that the priority is to develop a national Communications Strategy but that it is open to individual PPNs to undertake their own communications work locally.

Annual Report

- DRCD updated the NAG on the returns received, which are currently being compiled, following which document will proceed to design and print.
- A number of members raised issues regarding technical difficulties in completing the return. In response DRCD advised that, following the publication of the 2019 Annual Report, it intended to write to all PPNs and LAS seeking their feedback on the Annual Report process which would be fed into preparations for the following years' Reports.
- DRCD confirmed the best turnaround time and response rate to date and thanked SJI for their help. No date set for launch of AR yet.

Annual Conference

- Originally planned for Oct 2020, but postponed due to Covid. Possible alternative dates were discussed. Wicklow PPN to investigate dates for Thursday and Friday in mid-2021.
- DRCD outlined its original intention to visit all PPNs but due to heavy work load, this has not been possible to date but the Department would continue to endeavour to visit as many PPNs as possible.

7. Funding 2020 & Returns

- First tranche of 2020 allocation issued in April in advance of usual submissions. Funding for Support Workers in PPNs is now mainstreamed within the DRCD vote but is still subject to the annual Estimates process.
- The issue of national PPN coordinator was discussed with some advocating that it be considered as part of the Structural Review while others recommending that it be considered in advance of that. The issue of turnover of Resource Workers was also discussed.
- DRCD acknowledged high rate of turnover amongst Resource Workers, but observed this is common in C&V sector. DRCD also recommended that structural review should be undertaken first in order to provide the business case for any additional supports that may need to be put in place for PPNs.

8. Training Needs

- DRCD advised the group that SJI/WIT had been engaged to deliver a blended learning training programme involving online and face-to-face training. This was considered to be more sustainable than more traditional training programmes and will address staff and PPN member turnover issues. 5/6 modules to be delivered on relevant issues that target different stakeholders. Training will be rolled out following completion of Handbook.

9. Secretariat Network

- DRCD updated the NAG on the work of the Facilitator. 4 meetings held to date and the Facilitator's contract extended for further 2 meetings to allow the completion of the remaining areas of work, following the Facilitator's work with the Network on the new Handbook. TMcD provided an update of his experience with the Network and the Facilitator.

10. Representing the PPN

- DRCD outlined issue raised by one PPNs of LA staff officer representing PPN on community response forum.
- NAG pointed to the different opinions and understandings of the situation. It was agreed there needed to be clarity amongst all stakeholders on the role of PPNs on LA Boards and Committees.
- It was agreed that this issue be addressed as part of the structural review.

11. Community Wellbeing

- DRCD outlined its concerned with the slow rate of progress in the development of Community Wellbeing statements, with only 4 PPNs (apart from those involved in

pilot process or those who developed Statements independently) concluding their Statements. DRDC also outlined its concerns about the proposal by SJI to mothball this process until late 2021, following which a number of those involved would likely require refresher training.

- A number of NAG members outlined their positive experience with the Community Wellbeing process and spoke in support of continuing with the project, outlining the benefits of same in the long run.
- DRCD agreed with the importance of this initiative and outlined that funding would continue to be provided for those PPNs who are engaged with this process. Supports would also be provided for those PPNs who wished to engage. Funding would not be provided for those PPNs who were not engaging with this process. However, if these PPNs subsequently decided to engage, they would be required to make a business case to the Department for funding. DRCD would also examine the option to make engagement with Community Wellbeing a requirement for funding.

12. GDPR/FOI matters of responsibility

DRCD outlined concerns received from some PPNs in relation to GDPR. The Department will consult with the Department's GDPR Officer and present a paper on the matter for the NAG, for their views.

In relation to FOI, the Department advised that there should be no need for an FOI Officer for PPNs as all information should be publically available on PPN websites.

It was agreed to move Agenda Item 13 forward to next meeting.

13. A.O.B

- I. Confidentiality – NAG members. Discussed under Agenda item 2
- II. Department Nominees to NAG. To be discussed at next NAG meeting
- III. Under 18s. – To be discussed at next meeting

Next meeting: TBC

Seán Healy requested that the minutes record the NAG & PPN's appreciation for all of Niall Hayden's hard work and dedication to the work of the PPN's over the years and wished him well in his retirement. This was echoed by all those in attendance.

Meeting Ends