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List of Abbreviations

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<td>BCS</td>
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<td>OFMdFM</td>
<td>Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PfG</td>
<td>Programme for Government</td>
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<td>PHA</td>
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<td>Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise</td>
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<td>YJA</td>
<td>Youth Justice Agency</td>
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Introduction to CollaborationNI

CollaborationNI (CNI) was formally launched on 30 March 2011, as a consortium between the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), Chief Officers 3rd Sector (CO3) and Stellar Leadership, commissioned by Building Change Trust. CNI provides practical support and resources across the whole spectrum of collaborative working to voluntary and community sector organisations.

As part of Phase One of CNI, 553 events were held covering training, expert facilitation, legal support sessions, coaching and policy seminars for over 4,000 individuals from 754 organisations.

Phase Two, launched in July 2014, aims to produce deeper collaborations which will influence policy and decision makers. It will see an extension of the debate through a range of policy symposiums which will continue to challenge our thinking, examine current approaches and focus on particular models of collaboration, under a number of thematic areas, including health, social housing, young people, arts, criminal justice and older people.

The aim of the policy symposiums is to challenge, inform and develop political and government thinking about the support requirements of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to encourage and cultivate a culture of effective collaboration.

The broad range of discussion will also provide an opportunity for VCSE sector leaders and government officials to learn from good, and not so good, practices in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in building effective collaborations, resulting in improved services and better client outcomes.

The role of CNI is to facilitate discussions on the theme of collaboration in a way that that delivers better outcomes through high quality, professional services.

CNI aims to help the VCSE sector to work better together and has provided a range of different services to over 100 organizations. The support provided by CNI can be categorized into four broad areas:

- Action planning support;
- Legal advice;
- Expert facilitation; and
- Events.

For further information on the work of CollaborationNI please visit collaborationni.nicva.org
Whole of Government Approaches

This was the sixth CNI policy symposium of Phase Two of CollaborationNI which emerged from discussions which took place following on from both the ‘Co-Design and Co-Production’ seminar and the publication of the Centre for Effective Studies (CES) report into a Whole of Government Approach in June 2015.

Most people will recognise that the machinery of government operates vertically and in silos. Government departments often operate in an uncoordinated manner, but the ongoing public sector reform process and drafting of the next Programme for Government (PfG) mean that this is a timely moment to discuss how government can become more outcomes focused. The move away from isolated silos in public administration to formal and informal networks is a global trend driven by various societal forces, such as the growing complexity of problems that call for collaborative responses and the increased demand on the part of citizens for more personalised and accessible public services, which are to be planned, implemented and evaluated with their participation.

Delegates from across the VCSE sector, government, and the private sector participated in the seminar and heard four approaches on the various ways in which a whole of government approach can be implemented. The purpose of the seminar was to consider the following questions in the context of Northern Ireland.

What is a whole of government approach and how does it encourage collaboration between the third and public sectors?
Is a whole of government approach the answer?
What can we learn from international examples of whole of government approaches?
How can we make and implement whole of government policy?
The conference heard from four speakers who have first-hand experience of engaging in various forms of a Whole of Government Approach. They were:

- **Majella McCloskey**, Senior Manager, Centre for Effective Services (CES);
- **Steven Agnew MLA**, Leader, Green Party in Northern Ireland;
- **Dr. Kelly Wilson**, Acting Head of Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD), Department of Finance and Personnel; and
- **Maurice Leeson**, Children’s Services Professional Advisor & Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) programme manager.

This report summarises the main points of discussion from the conference.
What it is a Whole of Government Approach?

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) connects research, policy and practice to improve outcomes for communities, children and young people across the island of Ireland. CES is a not for profit, intermediary organisation with offices in Dublin and Belfast. CES works with a range of government departments and agencies, and not for profit and community based organisations. The Centre undertakes a wide range of project work to influence policy and systems change, champion service design and implementation and build knowledge, skills and capacity of the whole sector.

Majella opened her presentation by introducing the ‘Primer on Implementing Whole of Government Approaches’ report produced by CES in June 2015, which highlighted the importance of a whole of government approach\(^1\). The experience of CES working with government departments, agencies and services and indeed review of the public services reform literature more generally, indicated a shift towards more integrated, joined-up ways of working. For the past number of years, a number of initiatives CES were supporting, involved government departments and agencies coming together to co-fund, design and implement services in a more integrated way. While there were challenges in developing and implementing this way of working, it was apparent that there was enormous potential to produce better outcomes for citizens, particularly in tackling some of the intractable, ‘wicked’ problems facing society. CES undertook a review to determine what the evidence actually said about a whole of government approach and how it had been implemented internationally.

CES’ review of the literature indicated growing support for joined-up working at policy level. For example, the 2003 OFMdFM document, A Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland, strongly advocated for a collaborative, cross-departmental approach to societal problems which simply cannot be addressed by silo working. It was stated in the report that:

“The world for which policies have to be developed is becoming increasingly complex, uncertain and unpredictable... Key policy issues such as social need, low educational achievement and poor health are connected and cannot be tackled by departments or agencies acting individually.”

Majella made the point that before talking about whole of government approaches in any great detail it is important to understand exactly what is meant by the term. Whole of government approaches are essentially what practitioners in the VCSE sector would have called ‘joined up government’ but can better be defined as:

“... Coordination and management of a set of activities between... organisations that do not have hierarchical control over each other and where the aim is to generate outcomes that cannot be achieved by... working in isolation.”

In addition to this, whole of government approaches should be about enhancing co-ordination and integration, aligning incentives, structures, cultures and generating outcomes that cannot be achieved by individual agencies or units working separately.

Majella noted that one of the key findings of the report was that it was important to determine when to use, and not use, a whole of government approach. Adopting a whole of government approach can be a complex process and should only be adopted when appropriate for the task or issue at hand.

There are a number of internal and external drivers which can impact upon the need for a whole of government approach. Majella highlighted the response of the Executive to the Foot and Mouth crisis in Northern Ireland in 2001 which required a number of government departments and agencies to come together to deal with the issue, rather than just leave it to the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development to respond.

By operating in silos, departments can only go so far and only do so much, but by adopting a whole of government approach they can attempt to find new ways of delivering services that the community need and addressing some of the budgetary pressures that all departments are facing.
There are a number of different ways that a whole of government approach can be focused:

- It can operate on an **inter-departmental / inter-agency** basis, such as Healthy Ireland or Action Plan for Jobs;
- **Particular social groups** (pensioners, immigrants) e.g. UK Positive for Youth, 2011; Ireland’s Disability Strategy, Towards 2016;
- **Policy issue/sector** (transport, education) e.g. Scotland’s whole system approach to youth justice;
- **Geographical area** (neighbourhood, country), e.g. One Plan; Limerick Regeneration; and
- **Mode of service delivery** (one-stop-shop, e-government portal) e.g. Service Canada.

Whilst there are a number of clear benefits to adopting a whole of government approach, there are also a number of challenges that CES identified. Evaluation of whole of government initiatives can be challenging due to their complexity, the difficulty in establishing a counterfactual, and the limitations of some established methods of impact assessment to capture the changes in processes and ways of working. At present, some departments can be more highly rewarded for efficiently managing their own departmental budget than for moving beyond their silos out and engaging with others. In Northern Ireland the five party, mandatory coalition can make collaboration between different departments difficult, particularly if the departments are headed by ministers from different political parties.

The CES review identified a number of important lessons and recurring themes which Majella shared with attendees. It is necessary to have structures in place, but they are not sufficient in themselves, especially if there are inadequate boundary spanning skills and a boundary spanning mindset. Creating a culture that supports cross departmental work is therefore critical. It has also become apparent that there is a very clear need for better ways of evaluating and measuring the impact of a whole of government approach. It should be noted that a number of governments around the world, most notably Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, which have been using whole of government approaches for a number of years and they show no signs of backing away from them. They recognise that such approaches may be time-consuming, particularly in the early stages, but they are beneficial, and should be fully implemented as citizens expect their government to operate in a joined up way.

“**Often the real challenge of whole of government work is not the large-scale, high-level, multi-lateral exercises so much as the day-to-day realities of trying to work across boundaries to make sure that outcomes are achieved.**”
Majella said that it is well established that we should operate horizontally, but are often confined by vertical structures, with long chains of command between policy formulation to service delivery. The challenge is to move to a horizontal system where service uses are directly involved in policy formulation. There also must be a realisation that whole of government working should not solely be viewed as a high level concept and its success will depend on cross-boundary interpersonal working relationships, operating on a day to day basis.

“A policy may be a beautiful thing to behold in the isolation of bureaucracy, but what really counts is how the policy is implemented and how it translates into service delivery.”

Whole of government approaches will have implications for the VCSE sector. Majella made the point that whole of government approaches are not coming down the pipeline; they are already here. A number of government departments and agencies are already working on whole of government approaches and it is likely that they will become more prominent in the future.

Majella concluded her presentation by highlighting some of the tangible benefits for the VCSE sector that a whole of government approach can bring, which form the basis of the sector’s call for a more joined-up government approach over recent years. The VCSE sector has the ability to inject service users’ needs into whole of government design, stakeholder consultation and delivery. In addition, they have a pivotal role in the co-creation of services, bringing together the expertise of both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Evidence suggests that some of the most effective cross-government initiatives are designed with direct frontline input. Majella concluded by noting that because policy professionals often lack direct experience in service delivery, it is vital that VCSE organisations, which have that experience, are able to provide input throughout the design process to test the ‘implementability’ of a policy.
The Children’s Services Co-Operation Bill and how this fits with Whole of Government approaches

The Children’s Services Co-operation Bill (herein known as the Children’s Bill or the Bill) was sponsored by Steven Agnew MLA. Once made law it requires Northern Ireland government departments to discharge their functions and co-operate with one another in order to contribute to the achievement of certain specified outcomes relating to the well-being of children and young people, and to amend the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Bill passed the Final Stage in the NI Assembly on 3rd November 2015 is currently (as at 2 December 2015) awaiting Royal Assent.

Steven began his presentation by explaining how the Children’s Bill came about; how it was designed; and how it has passed through the Assembly, explaining that it originated in Scotland, where he observed that they have been seeking to do things differently.

The voluntary organisation Who Care’s Scotland lobbies on the issue of Scottish children in care and arranged for dozens of children to meet with the then First Minister Alex Salmond. As each child approached the First Minister they said “You’re my daddy”, making the point that the state, and every government department, had responsibility for each of those children’s lives, and the need for their wellbeing to be prioritised.

In Northern Ireland we think of ‘ministers’, ‘departments’ or ‘political parties’. We do not even have a ‘government’, we have an ‘Executive’. The language may not seem important, but in reality it minimises the idea of corporate, government responsibility, which should be delivering for the people of Northern Ireland.

Steven reiterated the point made by Majella in her presentation, that we have vertical structures of government but horizontal working patterns. He went on to say that his involvement with the Children’s Bill could be charted back as far as 2008 when, as working as a researcher for the then North Down Green Party MLA, Brian Wilson, he became a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s All Party Group on Children and Young People. The children’s sector had been lobbying for a statutory duty on government departments and agencies to co-operate on children’s issues. Steven admitted it took him some time to understand the need for this statutory duty as he, like most people, assumed that government departments could work closely, but it was only when he investigated the reality of working arrangements that he discovered the obstacles which actually exist.

Steven Agnew MLA
Leader, Green Party in Northern Ireland

Steven Agnew MLA was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly in May 2011, representing the North Down constituency. He currently serves on the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee and is the Chair of the Assembly All Party Group on Co-operatives and Mutuals and Chair of the All Party Group on Renewable Energy. He also sits on the All Party Groups on Children & Young People, Ethnic Minority Communities and International Development. He has long been a member of Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth and is also passionate about animal welfare issues and has been a vegetarian for over 10 years.
in 2010, when the draft Early Years Strategy for children aged 0-6 was brought forward by the Department for Education, Steven asked the question, “What is the Department for Health’s role in this strategy?” and was told that there was no role for that department. It was then that he realised the lack of a whole of government approach. Considering the fact that most children do not commence their education until they are three or four meant an education strategy for children aged 0-6 would actually have no impact on those under 3. As a result of this inherent flaw in the draft strategy it was rejected by both the children’s sector and politicians.

When Steven was elected as an MLA in 2011, he met with the Bills Office, who assists MLAs in drafting legislation, to discuss what will become the Children’s Act; giving an indication of how long this legislation has been in the pipeline. Steven knew that he wanted government to be co-operating but he had to spend a considerable period of time trying to determine who they should be co-operating with!

Following discussions with the children’s sector, Steven came to the understanding that there was consensus that the aims within the 10 year children’s strategy were correct, but that actual implementation was poor. The strategy had six, high level outcomes so he decided that these outcomes would form the basis for the Bill and that there should be a duty on “children’s authorities to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children” in the areas of:

(a) physical and mental health;
(b) the enjoyment of play and leisure;
(c) learning and achievement;
(d) living in safety and with stability;
(e) economic and environmental well-being;
(f) the making by them of a positive contribution to society;
(g) living in a society which respects their rights;
(h) living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share that characteristic.
Just as importantly, the Bill once it achieves Royal Assent and becomes law require the Executive to report, on an annual basis, on the effectiveness of co-operative working, because throughout the consultation and drafting processes the big question the report is not were always: what will happen if government does not co-operate? And how do we hold them to account? This ensures that the report is not just backwards looking but also identifies other opportunities for further co-operation. This is key, because the Bill, once made law, has to do more than be a ‘tick box exercise’, it has to change the culture of how the civil service operates and it has to reward civil servants who find new and innovative ways of co-operating, as it is the current system which restricts their ability to co-operate more. In addition to the annual Executive report, the NI Children’s Commissioner will produce their own report that will sit alongside this report, as an independent assessment of how well government is co-operating.

Another key aspect of the Bill centres on the issue of pooling budgets, as Steven believes it is only when government departments begin to do so that the real impact will be felt. Once passed the Act will provide an enabling power to poll budgets, but does not require it, as resources are often the key barrier that inhibits closer co-operation and causes breakdowns in relationships between departments. If there are shared goals between departments they are more likely to invest their resources, rather than maintaining a narrow focus on their core functions.

Steven gave an example which highlights the current lack of whole of government thinking, and explained how the Bill could provide better outcomes for people.

A baby was born in hospital that was dependent on oxygen to survive, but could not be brought home because there was an open fire in the residence. It was deemed as being too dangerous to store the oxygen in the house, as it was a fire risk. The baby then spent months in hospital, missing out on valuable bonding, at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds to the National Health Service. The cost of fitting a new heating system in the house was £1500 but the Department of Health, Social Service and Public Safety (DHSSPS) does not provide new heating systems. The Department of Social Development’s (DSD) assessment was that this was a health issue, as the house met all the necessary health and safety requirements so was habitable and they would not finance the new heating system. Technically, DSD was not responsible for dealing with this matter and for financing the new heating system and DHSSPS does not have the funding or expertise to fit the system. If however, both departments worked together and took corporate responsibility to help this child they could have pooled resources and expertise and dealt with this matter, allowing the child to leave hospital much sooner, reducing the cost to the government at the same time. Government departments need to realise they have a duty to help people and it is not “DSD” or “DHSSPS” money but it is the people’s money which they haveentrusted to government with to spend in the best interests of everyone.
Steven said that it will be difficult to measure the impact of some aspects of the Children’s Bill because the benefits that derive from it will be lifelong. It is easy to assess when something goes wrong, when for example, a child is excluded from school, goes through the court system and spends time in a juvenile justice system. The cost of a child not ending up in the juvenile justice system can be difficult to quantify and it is hard to link this saving directly to the Bill but you can easily quantify the costs of administering it, which makes it easy to attack the Bill and difficult to defend the positive impact it could have. Steven spoke about the case of Brighton and Hove Council, which moved to an integrated services model for children, and saved the council over £250k in a single year, whilst at the same time saw a significant drop in the cost of their foster care services, which previously had one of the highest cost per head of any council in England. They were able to reduce this through integrated working, not only allowing more money to be spent directly on children but delivering better outcomes for them.

“The Children’s Bill is about making government work more efficiently and effectively for children; about promoting good practices and making good practice, common practice; making sure that resources allocated towards children actually get spent on children.”

Steven concluded his presentation by saying that whilst it is positive that the legislation has been passed by the Assembly, the next step is to ensure that it works, which will be done by holding government to account and assisting them by highlighting best practice and focussing on outcomes.
Whole of Government: a Department of Finance and Personnel Perspective

The PSRD is a DFP division tasked with developing a programme of work informed by researching best practice approaches which involves contact with other government Departments, the private sector, community and voluntary bodies and arms’-length bodies. PSRD staff engage with and listen to others who have valuable views on the reform of public services. The aim of PSRD is to help stimulate innovation in service delivery and policy design and they have developed an innovation laboratory for Northern Ireland, similar to those that have been operating for some time in other countries.

Kelly began her presentation by explaining that she was going to talk about the measures that DFP is taking forward as part of a whole of government approach. In line with what previous contributors said, she made the point that ordinary people do not care which department, or which agency, are delivering a service- they only care about the quality of service they receive.

She acknowledged that there is a need to develop a better understanding of cross cutting issues and this can be best achieved by understanding what we mean by the term “collaboration” and the importance of reform.

Dr. Kelly Wilson
Acting Head of Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD), Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

Kelly is Acting Head of PSRD within DFP, with primary responsibility for leading the programme of work involving a range of different methodologies to lead, support and facilitate wider Public Sector Reform. She is also Programme Director for an Internal Budget Review on behalf of DFP and a Review of Cross Cutting Reform across the NICS.

Kelly joined DFP in August 2014 as Head of Business Consultancy Service (BCS) where she led a team of around 20 internal public sector management consultants, providing services to a range of clients within the NICS and wider public sector.
“Collaboration is working with others to do a task and to achieve shared goals. A fundamental element to the success of reform is encouraging collaboration between government departments and partnership working across all sectors.”

There are a number of drivers in the public sector reform agenda which make change necessary and there are a number of actions that have already been taken. The four key issues driving this change are:

1. Significant pressures on public finances;
2. Rising and changing demand for existing services;
3. A shift in the demographics of the population; and
4. Unprecedented level of change across the public sector.

In response to these drivers there have been a number of steps taken by government to begin the process of reforming structures. They are:

- Package of measures for restructuring and reform;
- Increased use of shared services and digitalisation;
- Establishment of PSRD to facilitate change- this will aim to enable and facilitate reform and investigate models of best practice; and
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Public Governance Review- this will provide a valuable opportunity to see how public services in Northern Ireland perform on the international stage. The report is due by the end of 2015 and will help to shape the reform agenda.

DFP have been engaged in a number of initiatives which involved them working across the whole of government, and this came about primarily out of a desire to cut costs and increase revenue. They hope to reduce civil service costs by ensuring closer working collaboration between departments so that they can identify new and more effective working procedures and better of delivery services. DFP established a fund of £30m for the financial year 2015/16 to provide upfront investment to identify long term savings. The fund is focused on early intervention and problems that need to be tackled on a cross departmental basis. 120 bids were received for this funding, 19 of which were successful and are currently being implemented. DFP has also been rolling out an expansion of shared services, going back to the Enterprise Share programme in 2010, which saw DFP take over the provision of back office services for the other Executive departments, and has thus far brought about £73m worth of efficiencies. Current plans will also see the number of Executive departments reduce from 12 to 9 from May 2016, bringing about efficiencies as the new structure will be comprised of larger, more effective departments which should assist in creating better, more joined up policies that will be easier to implement.
Another key step that DFP have taken in order to adopt a whole of government approach has been through the development of the Innovation Lab. Set up in 2014, by the then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA, the Innovation Lab was set up to develop solutions to complex problems in a short timescale, utilising subject experts in a “hothouse” environment. The Innovation Lab is a private collaboration between government, the VCSE sector, academics and service users, in an attempt to devise innovative solutions to complex problems and improve the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Kelly pointed to the fact that there are unprecedented levels of change currently taking place in the civil service and there is a need to ensure that at the end of this process government actually works better. This change also needs to move away from being process focused and needs to be more outcome focused to ensure that services are delivered in a better, more cost effective way. In order to do this the focus also has to shift so that innovation and collaboration are rewarded and recognised. One of the ways that DFP is trying to do this is through the NI Civil Service Awards scheme which recognises the successes of teams and individuals who improve public services.

Government also has a duty to listen better and it is impossible to try and implement a whole of government approach without talking to a wide range of people and take on board what they say and not just paying lip service to them. The Innovation Lab operates on the principle that everyone has something to contribute and they take a bottom-up approach to policy making, ensuring that staff who are involved in the delivery of services are directly involved in the design of the services, as very often they know what problems exist and how to do things better.

One of the key ways that PSRD set about improving public services is by improving access to government, developing a culture within Northern Ireland that embraces digital capability. By forwarding a digital inclusion agenda, through the Go On NI campaign, and promoting the idea of open data, through the Open By Default portal, they hope to make it easier for people in Northern Ireland to not only get online, but also to access services and information. The idea behind Open By Default is that the public sector will instinctively publish information in an easy to access, online format, so that the public can easily find documents without having to request them or seek out paper copies.
Kelly finished off her presentation by talking about the ongoing public sector reform process and discussing the enormous scale of reform, which requires considerable persistence and leadership to ensure that the opportunities presented are maximised. It is the role of DFP to facilitate a more collaborative process, ensuring that government departments become more outcomes focused and deliver a service which meets the needs of people in the 21st century.
A working example of Whole of Government Approach

The Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) is part of the Delivering Social Change/Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme. The aim of EITP is to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland by embedding early intervention approaches. Collectively funded over a four-year period by six government departments and Atlantic Philanthropies, the EITP also seeks to transform mainstream services to children and families in order to deliver a long term legacy of improvement.

The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) brings together a range of agencies, including VCSE sector organisations, that aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CYPSP aims to plan and provide services for children and young people more efficiently by making joint decisions about the services needed, and funding these services together.

Maurice started his presentation by saying that collaboration is not a new idea and highlighted his role, as what he called a ‘boundary spanner’, working part time managing DHSSPSs EITP and the Health and Social Care Board’s CYPSP.
He highlighted the following CES quote from 2013 on the issue of Children’s Reform Service.

“All reform initiatives, programmes or policy frameworks emphasise a collective/shared responsibility for the welfare and protection of children, with interagency and cross government collaboration central to improvement and progress.”

Like previous speakers, Maurice also provided a definition of what a whole of government approach is, again focusing on the need for joined up government and the dismantling of silos.

He went on to talk about the work being undertaken by EITP through the Delivering Social Change initiative, to jointly fund a programme of early intervention with young people. Whilst there are six government departments involved in EITP, DHSSPS are the senior responsible officers, who take the lead on behalf of all the departments in the project. The six departments, and Atlantic Philanthropies, have set out a shared vision of what they want EITP to do and they have all agreed to put an amount of money into a budget to find it. In order to do that they had to establish that there was a shared commitment to do so. Anyone involved in early intervention will know that there has been a tendency to label this as a ‘health matter’, but the consequences of not getting it right often mean the involvement of a social worker, an educational welfare officer, or a criminal justice practitioner. Those involved came to the realisation that if they did not get things right there would be consequences for the young person involved, their family, their community and all other government departments. It is the aim of EITP to:

1. Equip all parents with the skills needed to give their child the best start in life;
2. Support families when problems first emerge; and
3. Positively address the impact of adversity on children by intervening both earlier and more effectively to reduce the risk of poor outcomes later in life.

Maurice said that while it is important to understand the ‘what’ of what EITP is trying to do, it is equally important to understand the ‘how’. EITP is committed to the use of evidence, which is important when working closely with a large number of departments. This is especially important when there is a focus placed on outcomes, because it is this which has allowed departments to move away from their individual responsibilities, to their shared ownership of a set of outcomes for families. EITP is also about delivering transformational change and all of their projects are tasked with influencing how mainstream services are delivered.

EITP decided to adopt a whole of government response as a consequence of the need to focus on the needs of particular social groups, in this case the most vulnerable families; they also wanted to address particular policy needs, and they wanted solutions for problems that are far reaching,
complex and hard to tackle, which meant changing how they approach the delivery of public services.

EITP has three different workstreams which they use to deliver a number of different projects. Workstream 1, which is their Universal Early Intervention scheme, comprises of three different projects which are led by the Public Health Agency and the Department of Education and are delivered respectively by the Health and Social Care Trust, the Department of Education and the Education Authority, none of whom have direct involvement with the VCSE sector. However, Workstreams 2 and 3, which focus on Support to Address Early Onset of Problems and Intervening Earlier and More Effectively with Families are led by statutory agencies and departments, are delivered in partnership with VCSE sector organisations. The focus on all of these services is to find new approaches to mainstream services and to intervene earlier and more effectively.

Maurice spoke of his belief that one of the greatest challenges to pursuing a whole of government approach is the difficulty in demonstrating effectiveness. He believes that this can be countered by delivering better outcomes; ensuring that appropriate monitoring frameworks are in place; and placing a greater focus on prevention and early intervention which can show how the wider system has been influenced and highlight the delivery of greater efficiencies.

Maurice then spoke of his work with the CYPSP. The CYPSP is a cross-sectoral, strategic partnership, consisting of the leadership from all key agencies who have a responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people in Northern Ireland, and the VCSE sector, and has its basis in legislative requirements to produce an integrated children’s services plan.

The role of the partnership is to:
- Provide integrated planning and commissioning;
- Optimise the use of resources;
- Focus on outcomes and evidence;
• Focus on early intervention and prevention;
• Devise CYPSP/individual organisational business, corporate and community plans;
• Enable participation and involvement;
• Develop an effective and efficient, fully mandated structure.

CYPSP is comprised of ten regional subgroups and five outcomes groups. It is the role of the regional subgroups to carry out integrated planning for specific groups of vulnerable young people on a regional basis and they place a specific emphasis on sharing resources across agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people. The five outcomes groups are responsible for assessing need, developing integrated planning and commissioning, commissioning additional family support services and providing support.

Maurice finished off his presentation by discussing what the learnings have been from the CYPSP process. In particular, he wanted to highlight:
• Outcomes focus helps create a shared language around what we all want to achieve and gives a focus for co-operative work;
• Use of information system and the outcomes framework helps to quantify success;
• Demonstrating the “added value” of collaborative work can be challenging and it is not often measured or reported on;
• Attentive to the demands of individual organisational agendas and priorities (not everything needs to be done collaboratively);
• Getting just the right structure to support co-operation is difficult; and
• Co-operative work needs time, and the skills, knowledge and competencies to deliver this work need support.
Question and Answer Session
Following the presentations, delegates were given an opportunity to address questions to the contributors, covering a wide range of areas relating to whole of government approaches. Below is a summary of this discussion.

Q. I am surprised at the lack of evidence that exists which supports a whole of government approach. Are there any examples of countries that have any evidence which supports a whole of government approach?
A. No strong evidence base exists but we must remember that a lack of evidence does not mean that a whole of government approach does not work - it just means that recording mechanisms are not in place. Governments and agencies around the world are not backing away from this approach because they know it is in the best interests of citizens. The Scottish government have been leading the way on this approach and it is interesting to see that they have replaced the Scandinavian countries in being a world leader in terms of adopting innovative approaches to government.

Q. In terms of the Children’s Bill, is there a statutory duty on government departments to pool budgets?
A. No. Guidance from DFP indicated that this would have been too prescriptive and there was a belief that it was more important at the present time to build up trust between departments and agencies.

Q. How is it possible for VCSE organisations to engage with the Innovation Lab?
A. The Innovation Labs are run by a sponsoring government department who identify a particular problem and what the Lab’s outcomes should be. The Innovation Lab then identify a wide range of key stakeholders who have the key people and they bring them together in the same room to thrash out the issues.

Q. Has there been any discussion about creating a single procurement body for VCSE organisations?
A. Not aware that this has been discussed but it is a good idea and there is an onus on government to challenge itself on how it operates.
Feedback and Key Messages
Following the conclusion of the presentations, delegates were asked to complete a feedback form to capture the key messages related to the potential benefits of co-design and co-production. The key messages that were identified from the feedback forms were as follows:

To government
We need government to:
• Understand that a whole of government approach tackles a wide range of issues that impact on the lives of many people-it should be about outcome, not process.
• To value the role of the VCSE sector in contributing to whole of government approaches to achieve a range of complex societal challenges.
• Reduce bureaucracy and duplication so that we can free up finance and identify the gaps in provision of services which currently exist.
• Encourage and support collaboration among government departments and between the public and VCSE sectors in terms of improving outcomes.
• Recognize that for collaborations to succeed there is a need for time and resources at the start of the process.
• Incentivize collaboration by ensuring that government departments and the civil service are encouraged to work more closely with VCSE organisations.

To politicians
We need politicians to:
• Move beyond the ‘party line’ and find a consensus on the issues that matter to people.
• Show leadership on collaboration by genuinely working together in order to find long-term, sustainable solutions to the problems we all face.
• Support the achievement of long-term outcomes and move away from short-termism.
• To recognize and champion the role of VCSE sector. As the cuts deepen, there is a real threat to the VCSE sector. If we are to truly embrace a whole of government approach, an outcomes model will recognize the contribution of the VCSE sector.

To the VCSE sector
The VCSE sector needs to:
• Develop supported networks and collaborations.
• Influence those in power and speak with one voice on areas of common interest.
• Lead by example, by showcasing the value of partnerships.
• Support and encourage funders to engage in best practice before entering into collaborative processes.
• Prepare itself for a more joined up, whole of government approach.
To funders
Funder need to:

- Streamline the commissioning process and ensure that social value, not just cost, is given the appropriate weighting.
- Ensure that there is adequate, protected, funding in place to help support the VCSE sector.
- Support capacity building and implementation of collaborative working models.
76% of respondents said that the overall input was either Excellent or Very Good. 94% of respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they found the input useful and 94% of respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the input increased their knowledge.

Delegates were asked to reflect on the event and below are some of their comments.

“Over the past twelve months CollaborationNI has assisted the voluntary and community sector to consider both the drivers and enablers for this way of working- it is key that government catches up!”

“Where collaboration is required it will happen first, last and always.”

“Edifying and encouraging. Certainly a lot to think about and explore.”

“This session consolidated for me the awareness that this approach is here to stay.”