Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) is a regional network organisation, consisting of over 1800 organisations. We support and engage our network to advance their knowledge and skills in community development, to influence policy and to use community development to reduce health inequalities.

Community Development and Health Network

CDHN welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation regarding statutory community planning partners. We believe that well implemented and resourced community planning can achieve the aim of physical, economic and social environmental wellbeing, thus improving health outcomes for local communities. Added to this it is possible that community planning to have a positive impact on health inequalities.

# **Identifying partners**

The public health framework stipulates the need for and benefit of a whole systems approach, such an approach would add richness to the community planning process and help yield greater successes an improved outcomes. CDHN would advocate for a whole systems approach to be an underlying principle for community planning, making the identification of statutory partners the start of a longer term process to involve all stakeholders into the process. Identifying statutory partners presents some challenges;

* Identifying organisations who carryout significant work relating to the economic, social environmental wellbeing is important but it carries the risk that other organisations and government departments may perceive/argue that they do not have a clear role or responsibility for the design, implementation and ultimately delivery of a community plan.
* Choosing partners who provide services across the whole region which are likely to be of equal importance across all 11 new council areas is important approach when taking regional view. However translating the regional to the local may present a challenge, when taking differing local needs and capacities it is likely the partners will be required to be involved at different levels and distinct capacities in each area. It is possible identification of specific partners may hinder the tailoring of partners and ways of operating to the identified needs and actions of each area.

However, CDHN realise that it can be difficult to get buy in and commitment and that detailing statutory partners will compel, at least, some organisations and bodies to be involved in community planning, especially in the short term. In the longer term CDHN would like to see a whole systems approach underpinning community planning.

In relation to the list of already identified partners CDHN would recommend that Commissioner for Older People and SportNI are included on the list. As not only will they be able to assist in the delivery of community plans they can also advocate and speak for vulnerable and less well represented communities.

Request for further guidance

CDHN very much welcome Public Health Agency being listed and feel that there is a really strong fit between the strategic public health framework and the anticipated outcomes of community planning. However, government departments have clear have a role and responsibility in all the areas identified as necessary component of community planning. For example, community development will be essential to the success of community planning and there is no reference to Department of Social Development. DSD have responsibility for community development and have a strategy for community development and urban regeneration, which will relate to some of the work being undertaken within community plans. Clearer information regarding roles, responsibilities and linkages between community planning regional strategic policy and direction as lead by the departments is required. Joining up local government with the Executive would undoubtedly streamline effort, reduce duplication and improve outcomes. CDHN feel that we should harness the opportunity which community planning presents to link local with regional. This appears especially pertinent as the time for reviewing and developing a Programme for Government will co-inside with the development of community plans.

Given this CDHN feel that further information and statutory guidance for Government Departments with regards participation in community planning should be developed as should clear guidelines as to how community plans are to be mapped against strategic direction with the Executive.

CDHN are pleased that the role of the community and voluntary sector within community planning has been highlighted but as with the government departments clearer information regarding participation and responsibilities is required.

For further information or clarification please contact:

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