



VALUING OUR SECTOR

THE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2022



Chief Officers 3rd Sector

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INTRODUCTION

Our first in person gathering since 2019 is a milestone moment for our sector and for CO3 as a representative organisation. All of you reading this report and attending the conference already know the important role played by your organisations collectively and individually, in local communities and across Northern Ireland. This is your daily work, your motivation and your way of meeting the needs of the people and communities you serve.

In shaping this conference, and in commissioning the research which has led to the publication of this important document, we want to ensure the wider world also garners an appreciation of that work.

It can almost become too easy to say we are living in challenging times, or that the pressures faced by charitable and community organisations are unprecedented. In fact, it is said so often that the message can become diluted to the point where it is meaningless.

But it is the case that the cumulative impact of increased demand on our services, aligned to reduced funding and resources, creates a stress that in previous years may have been dealt with and then reduced. Now that stress is in danger of becoming the new post pandemic normal for the Third Sector.

Covid, the lockdowns, vastly reduced fundraising opportunities and a cost-of-living crisis which shows no sign of easing in the short term, all create a huge pressure on our organisations. Against this backdrop Northern Ireland remains politically paralysed, with no local Ministers taking new funding decisions or implementing new policies which could enable us to deliver for our users in a more sustainable way. These are the pressures we face.

All of that means that there is no better time to examine and highlight the role played by Third Sector organisations.

In this report we have highlighted the contribution made to the local economy and to society by all of our organisations. We have also, with the assistance of a few projects which allowed us access to look at their work in more detail, examined the daily impact they have and how people's lives are improved by our large and small charities and enterprises. We also went outside our own sector and sought views from policy makers, opinion formers, stakeholders, academics and media to ask - 'what do you understand about the Third Sector in Northern Ireland?'

While the cost-of-living crisis may cast dark clouds over the news, and it is a real concern for our sector, what shines through from the feedback and interviews is our passion and ambition. CO3 members and the organisations they represent are job creators who help the economy run; they are health & wellbeing advocates who are transforming the lives of patients and families; they are the 'shock absorber' to support people in tough times; they are the backbone of communities. Day and daily they are doing not just good work, but great work.

It's time now to talk about the value of our sector.



THANK YOU TO OUR RESEARCH PARTNERS

OUR RESEARCH PARTNERS

This research "Valuing Our Sector" has been kindly supported by our three Research Partners:

- **Clarke & Co**
- **Ecclesiastical/Marsh**
- **Community Finance Ireland**

Without the support of these Research Partners, we would simply be unable to produce research of this breadth and calibre. We really appreciate the vision and commitment of our partners in providing CO3 members with this quality, evidence-based report. We hope that it will be a practical and useful tool in highlighting the value that the sector delivers both socially and economically to funders and stakeholders.

We wish to acknowledge MW Advocate who conducted the research, compiled the report and presented it at the 2022 CO3 Annual Leadership Conference. Experts in Public Affairs, PR and Research Studies, the MW Advocate team, Brendan Mulgrew, Carl Whyte and Brendan Scott grasped the brief immediately, adding value at every stage of the process with creative ideas and practical guidance. Their understanding of the Community and Voluntary sector and their expertise in garnering and interpreting data has been invaluable to CO3.

The full report of the findings into "Valuing our Sector", presented at the 2022 CO3 Leadership Conference, is also available on our website at www.CO3.org.uk



Our Research Partners



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OUR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Everyone who works in a Third Sector organisation in Northern Ireland will recognise the invaluable and essential services they deliver on a daily basis. It is often taken for granted by some outside the sector and perhaps even by some of us who work within. So it is important that every now and then we pause, take stock and drill down into the detail of the work, the footprint and the finances of the sector so that we can all begin to understand the important role that it has not just on people who use the services, but on the social and economic fabric of daily life in Northern Ireland.

The aim of this study is to begin to set the benchmark of the impact the Third Sector has. It looks at both the numbers and the stories of the sector, to establish a quantitative and qualitative understanding of how the work benefits NI. It also looks at where the challenges will come and the ambition organisations have as we move forward.

IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The headline figures show the economic impact, with the sector revenue totalling £2.4billion annually, while the spending contributes 4.3% of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product. The comparable figure for the UK is less than 1%. And with a workforce of more than 37,000, the employment of the sector makes it larger than the NI Civil Service (circa 23,000). Through both salaries and supply chain, every pound invested in the Third Sector has an additional value to the wider economy, at £1.71 and £1.25 respectively.

Cumulatively, with formal volunteers, trustees and employees, more than 9.3% of the population of Northern Ireland is actively involved with charity and voluntary sector organisations. This figure is even higher when you consider the number of informal voluntary roles which drive local sports and community groups.

With 1 in 10 people in Northern Ireland playing some sort of role with the sector, the reach cannot be ignored. What that means, beyond the statistics, is that there is a huge reliance on the sector.

WHAT IF THE SECTOR DID NOT EXIST?

Within the context of this study, we have framed that with the question 'What would the impact be if these organisations did not exist?' Through the responses from the sector it is clear that the damage would be very significant and very negative. Be it to cancer patients and their families living without support, people trying to apply for benefit or get help with personal debt being stranded, start ups without strategic advice, or people living with mental ill health being left without the support or coping strategies.

Poverty, homelessness, mental and physical health depletion, increase in crime, increased unemployment - these are just a few of the main concerns that were directly raised in response to that key question.

While the question may seem far fetched, when 66% of respondents cite funding and cost of operating as the key challenge going forward, it is clear that there really is a challenge for many to keep their operation going in the coming years. This report shows that some charities are already working in deficit or have staff stretched to deliver their services. Many have already had to look at where new funding streams may come from when key European Funding ends.

And with Government funding, to deliver key programmes, training or services, being the main funding source for 36% of respondents, the message that public finances are stretched is worrying for future plans.

Cost-of-living crises can hit charities in two ways, first driving up their own costs and

secondly reducing the charitable donation income, as households tighten their purse strings and generous giving comes second to meeting rising costs to heat homes and purchase groceries.

Despite these concerns, there remains a strong ambition within the sector. Most organisations want to grow their services and reach more people in whatever aspect of support they provide. This desire to deliver speaks to the passion with which these people take to their roles. They see the benefit they bring - that might be training a dog who can help a child live with autism, which has a knock on positive impact on the whole family, or a charity which lobbies to ensure that new legislation has the biggest impact possible on the wider public. They talk about being 'shock absorbers' and the backbone of the community. They know the support they provide is 'life changing'. This aspect of the work is not always quantifiable. But if these organisations did not exist the vacuum left would have a significant detrimental impact.

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

With all the positive, it is important to recognise where change can be made too. Often it takes external vantage points to see where these may be, which is why we sought external views from academia, media, politicians, business and Government. There was strong understanding of the good work the sector does, but most interviewees felt that Government underestimates the work the sector does. What also came through was the need for a more strategic approach that would allow better measurement of outcomes, removal of duplication of services and a move to collaboration and partnership approaches, where co-design and co-production could come to the fore.

Fundamentally too, it was highlighted that there was a need for a clear and cohesive

voice to represent the sector, which would allow the needs and views of the sector to sit alongside the other representative voices of sectors in the media and with Government.

WHAT NEXT?

From small local community organisations with just a few volunteers to multi-million pound social enterprises with hundreds of staff, the Third Sector is huge. And with different impacts, measurement methodologies and reporting practices, it is difficult to understand the full value of each organisation and then of the whole sector. Moreover, given the breadth of areas they work in it is hard to quantify the impact of each and every one in the same way. When you look at indirect benefit, such as mental wellbeing, is an issue which came up many times in all types of organisations, the means of understanding these impacts is difficult to gauge.

But this is a baseline study. It seeks to set a bar in valuing the sector. Future studies will be able to take more time and resource to understand even more about the economic and social impact. This will be further improved by studies of clusters within the sector of similar organisations, geographies or areas of work.

The Recommendations we make here are to set the direction for more research and analysis, as well as the development of standards that will allow more accurate measurement of actions within the sector. This, along with the development of a more coherent collective voice to raise awareness of the work of the sector and the issues it faces, will provide a greater picture of the Value of our Sector.

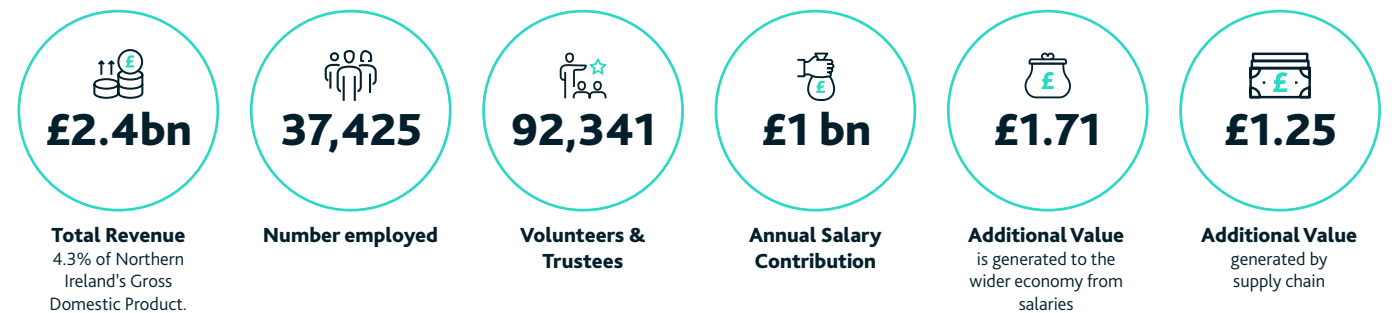
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Government will have to engage positively and proactively with the third sector and Third Sector representative bodies to ensure that fiscal pressures do not negatively impact the provision of funding and of services. The Third Sector needs to continue to set out a series of requirements to secure its short-term future but also safeguard and enhance the positive contribution it makes across society.
- Additional research on the level of philanthropy in Northern Ireland and how Third Sector organisations can build up an income from reserves/investment should be commissioned.
- The engagement between Government and the Third Sector is for most organisations through the Department of Communities – this should be widened to include The Executive Office, the Department of Education, Department of Economy and Department of Health.
- A Third Sector skills audit be carried out identifying the range of skills and expertise currently provided to the public, service-users and Government by Third Sector organisations.
- The Third Sector should undertake an awareness raising campaign among stakeholders demonstrating the full range of skills and talents of those working across Third Sector organisations and highlighting the sector's significant economic impact.
- While there is no nationally or internationally agreed measure of social impact, by agreeing one methodology and ensuring that all Third Sector organisations are supported to implement it, the Third Sector in Northern Ireland can produce an annual report demonstrating economic and social value and impact.
- To ensure that a full measurement of the scale of the sector, engagement with the Charity Commission should be undertaken to agree how data on income, staffing, and other accounting measures for organisations can be captured in a clear and accessible way. This will allow clearer quantification of the impact of the sector.



The VALUE OF THE SECTOR

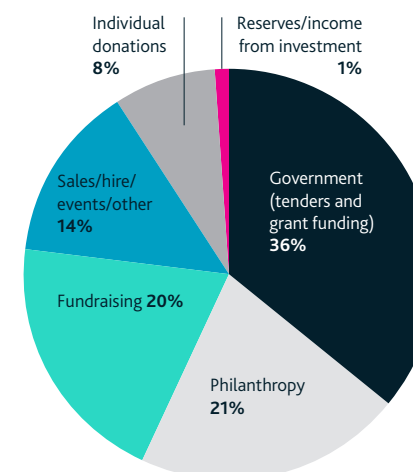
THE VALUE OF THE SECTOR



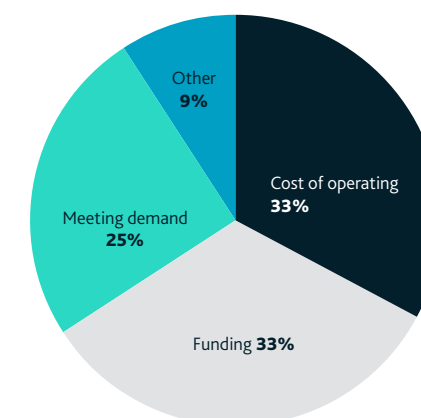
AREAS OF WORK

ANIMAL WELFARE	EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	OLDER PEOPLE
ARTS	FAITH	PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
BENEFITS/FINANCIAL ADVICE	FUNDING SUPPORT	SPORT
BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS	GENERAL WELLBEING	HOMELESSNESS
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	GOOD RELATIONS	TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
DOMESTIC ABUSE	HEALTH	TRAINING/EDUCATION,
DISABILITY	HOUSING	VOLUNTEERING
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	LEGAL /JUSTICE SERVICE	WOMEN
ENVIRONMENT/PLACE/CLIMATE/PLANET	MENTAL HEALTH	YOUNG PEOPLE

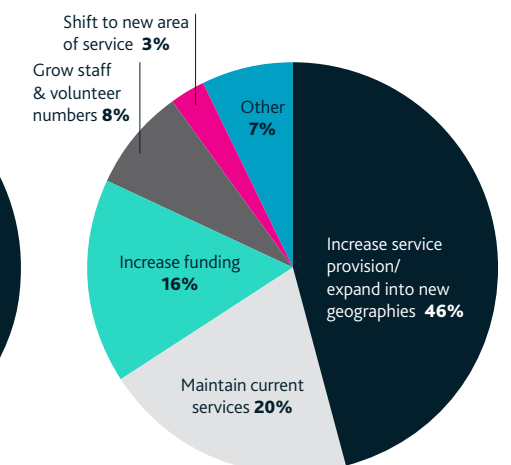
INCOME SOURCE



CHALLENGES



AMBITION



THE ECONOMIC SCALE OF THE THIRD SECTOR

The Third Sector in Northern Ireland is a cornerstone of our society - an innovative, vibrant and energetic sector whose influence is felt every minute of every day in our cities, towns, villages, streets, parks, countryside, coastlines and even the air we breathe.

Its role and value to the Northern Ireland economy and society is huge. **In revenue terms the sector's value is £2.4 billion per annum and through spending contributes 4.3% of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product.**

The sector employs 37,425 people, with a direct **weekly salary contribution of £19.36 million to the economy, totalling £1 billion per annum. That means for every additional pound invested in the Third Sector which is paid as salaries, £1.71 in additional value is generated to the wider economy.**

There are 81,492 volunteers engaged by Third Sector organisations and 10,849 working registered as charitable trustees. That means a total of 129,000 people are directly engaged with the sector, representing 9.3% of the entire Northern Ireland population aged between 15 and 74.

The sector's contribution to local enterprise is significant. **In supplier terms alone, the respondents to the survey indicated an average annual spend of £334,838 with local suppliers. This relatively**

large figure reflects the reality of the Third Sector – it is characterised by organisations of all sizes, including some of the largest, and best-funded enterprises in Northern Ireland. In term of spend with suppliers, that means that £1.25 of additional value is generated to businesses and enterprises who supply the Third Sector for every additional pound spent.

While the sector reports significant pressure on funds and fundraising, our respondents debt to income ratio stood at around 8.1% which signifies a sector with a relatively low level of debt despite size and scale of some in terms of revenue and employee numbers. In addition, there was no real plan to expand debt in the coming years, with debt estimated to rise very slightly to 9% of income.

The traditional view of charitable organisations is that they raise money, mainly through donations, and then use that to provide a local service or support people. The scale of the sector is misunderstood and underestimated – in Northern Ireland the Third Sector is worth over £2billion directly, engages through employment or volunteering nearly 10% of the population, and is a **major economic player** through wages and supply changes. This speaks to organisations which are well managed by capable leaders with good levels of productivity and outcomes, playing a key role in the economy and in society.

WHERE DOES INCOME COME FROM?

The largest single funder for Third Sector organisations in Northern Ireland is Government, either through direct core funding or contracted services (sometimes but not always via tender) with 36% of those surveyed citing one or both as a source of funding. The next two largest funding sources are income from philanthropy, including trusts and foundations, followed by direct fundraising activity undertaken by the charity, at 21% and 20% of total responses.

Individual donations, including memberships and subscriptions was cited as a funding source by 8% of those surveyed, with 14% citing sales/events/hire, which includes social enterprise activity, as a source of funding. Just 1% of those surveyed cited funding as coming from reserves, investments or other income.

While the survey did not analyse volumes of funding from each of these sources, it is clear that Government funding plays a hugely important role in financial support for the community and voluntary sector. The outlook for this funding is challenging given the competing demands on departmental funding in the short-term and the likely increase in pressure on public finances in the medium and long term due to the fiscal impact of coronavirus support and energy crisis support. There is however, a significant amount of financial resource unallocated at present in Northern Ireland due to the absence of a functioning Executive. Any return of the NI Executive would reduce the short-term funding pressures in the first instance.

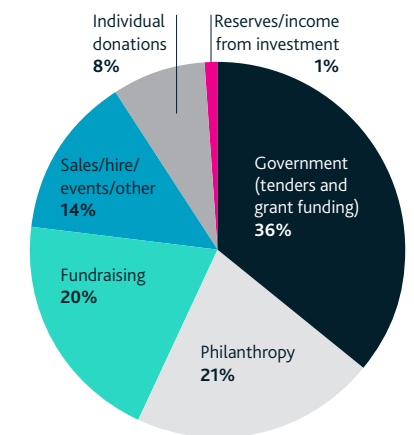
In addition, the upcoming PEACE PLUS programme is likely to provide some financial resource to the Third Sector both directly and via intermediate bodies such as councils, but this can require diversion to delivery of services that programme requires instead of the main service delivered by the Third Sector organisation- which may be more aligned to need.

Some research suggests that UK philanthropic and charitable giving sits at a lower level than other developed countries¹ and there is a range of research suggesting that charitable giving from individuals in Northern Ireland sits higher than the UK average and in some case sits highest of all UK regions. The amount donated by individual donors has dropped however with a NICVA March 2021 study² showing that the average individual charitable donation in 2020 was £135, down from £169 in 2019. There exists among certain Third Sector organisations a perception that private philanthropy here falls beneath levels elsewhere in Ireland and the UK - countries which already fall behind the average in the developed world.

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on household incomes is likely to see further pressure on individual donations made by people living in Northern Ireland. While media discussion rightly focusses on the impact of energy and cost-of-living pressures on families, an additional focus has now switched to the pressures on businesses, while the potential problems facing the Third Sector in this area have not been widely discussed thus far.

The pressure on households and businesses however will also particularly impact the 14% of organisations who cite sales/hire/event revenue as a source of income. Many Third Sector organisations reported a significant drop in this type of funding during the Covid-19 pandemic and could face a similar drop in demand for these products and services in the coming year.

A small amount (1%) of respondents cited income from investment or reserves and similar sources as a source of funding. This is distinct from philanthropy – this considers income from management investments or other sources. Given the size of the sector in terms of revenue, this is low and an immediate step which could be taken by the sector is to explore how this can be increased



All organisations, no matter what their funding stream or size may be, have concerns about the future. Cost-of-living issues will mean increased demand, while their own running costs grow. At a time when the public purse is being squeezed, and significant funding streams such as the European Social Fund will soon disappear, there is cause for concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Government will have to engage positively and proactively with the Third Sector and third sector representative bodies to ensure that fiscal pressures do not negatively impact the provision of funding and of services. The Third Sector needs to set out a series of requirements to secure its short-term future but also safeguard and enhance the positive contribution it makes across society.
- Additional research on the level of philanthropy in Northern Ireland and how Third Sector organisations can build up an income from reserves/investment should be commissioned.
- The engagement between Government and the Third Sector is for most organisations through the Department of Communities – this should be widened to include The Executive Office, the Department of Education, Department of Economy and Department of Health.

¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1013974700175>

² <https://www.nicva.org/stateofthesector/giving>

BEHIND THE FIGURES

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT THE Third Sector

To understand the impact of the organisations' work, we asked each to outline what the impact of a ceasing of their operations would have in Northern Ireland. Our survey received a huge range of responses – they were broad ranging and fall into what this report identifies as ten different categories:

1. **A reduction in wellbeing and inclusion opportunities for individuals and families** - examples include sport, music, arts and engagement and activities, disability support charities.
2. **A directly negative impact on household amenity including income** - examples include family support groups, childcare providers and food banks.
3. **An increased risk to life** - examples included charitable organisations supporting domestic violence victims, children and families.
4. **A complete removal of advice or service which is not offered by another provider either in Government, private sector or Third Sector** - the closure of organisations in this sector would see the full removal of the service for the population in Northern Ireland. Examples of this include organisations providing advice services in specialised areas, specialised medical support services and specialised disability support services.
5. **The removal of service provision from Government public services** - a significant number of Third Sector organisations fund staff positions within Government organisations (hospitals, research facilities are some examples) and their closure would see the end of these external and internal services.

6. **The removal of service which substitutes services provided by Government** - in some areas Government provide services directly to the population, whereas in others Third Sector organisations are tasked with the provision of these services. Their removal would see a postcode lottery service provision across Northern Ireland. Examples include residential care services provided by charitable organisations in some areas.
7. **The removal of education and training opportunities for adults and young people** - examples include workplace training organisations
8. **A decline in animal welfare** - the vast majority of animal support and welfare services are provided by third sector organisations and any closures in this sector would have a direct impact on animal welfare.
9. **A decline in environmental welfare and amenity** - there are a huge number of environmental charities operating across urban and rural areas whose closure would have a significant impact on green spaces, parks and coastlines.
10. **A negative impact on community relations** - a range of organisations continue to play an active role in community relations across Northern Ireland, including at interfaces as well as more strategic medium and longer term work. Their closure would have a negative impact on this area.

A thread through the responses from all organisations was that not only would the closure have a negative impact on the local community, it would also see the disappearance of specific expertise and skill set which was simply not being provided at any serious level by any part of Government or the private sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A Third Sector skills audit be carried out identifying the range of skills and expertise currently provided to the public, service-users and Government by Third Sector organisations.
- The Third Sector should undertake an awareness raising campaign among stakeholders demonstrating the full range, skills and talents of those working across Third Sector organisations.

HOW DO

Third Sector OR- GANISATIONS MEASURE IMPACT?

It was clear that while each organisation understood the impact of their removal, there was no consistency regarding how impact, output and outcomes were assessed. A third of organisations (33%) did not measure their impact in any way and while two thirds (66%) of organisations did the measurement of impact at micro level – using methods including informal feedback from users, formal customer engagement surveys right through to the commissioning of external social value research and employing of staff whose task is impact measurement and evaluation.

An issue requiring immediate attention is the one third of community and voluntary sector organisations who reported that they did not measure outputs in any way. In addition, there is a huge gap in the level of output measurement among those who indicated that they did carry out measurements of it. Some measurements were based on oral feedback or feedback forms while at the other end of the scale some organisations engage in measurements which are exceptionally detailed across all outputs, outcomes, performance indicators or other appropriate measurement.

RECOMMENDATION:

- While there is no nationally or internationally agreed measure of social impact, by agreeing one methodology and ensuring that all Third Sector organisations are supported to implement it, the Third Sector in Northern Ireland can produce an annual report demonstrating economic and social value and impact.
- To ensure that a full measurement of the scale of the sector, engagement with the Charity Commission should be undertaken to agree how data on income, staffing, and other accounting measures for organisations can be captured in a clear and accessible way. This will allow clearer quantification of the impact of the sector.



IMPACT OF COVID-19

HAS THERE BEEN A CHANGE IN DEMAND SINCE COVID-19?

78% of organisations reported an increase in demand for their services during and after the Covid-19 pandemic with 22% reporting no change in demand or a decrease in demand for their services. Some organisations have reported a doubling in demand from users while others have identified the increasingly complex nature of their engagement - whereas in the past a service user may have required one service, now they require multiple services.

The impacts of this increase have included; pressure on fundraising demand for innovation in service provision and resulting change in staffing, training and working methods including the move online. While a minority of organisations reported a

decrease in demand, these decreases have had a significant impact on their own funding streams and medium to longer term organisational sustainability.

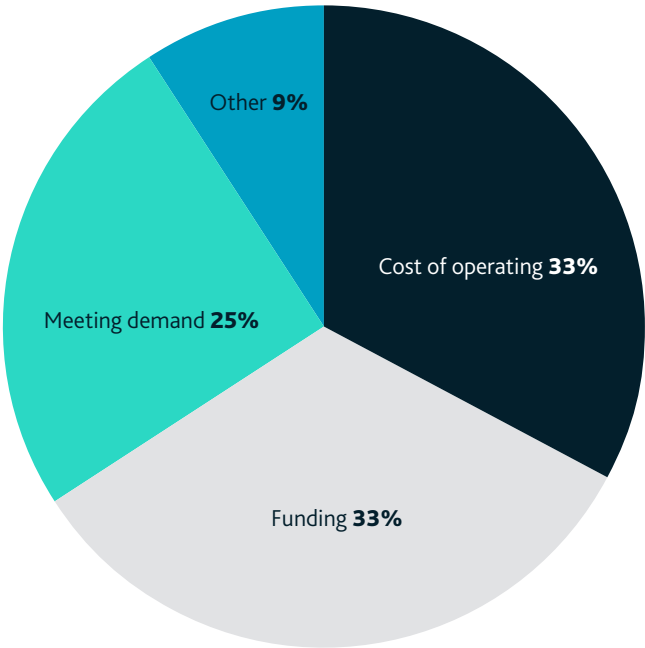
In some cases the incomes generated from sales (direct sales, social enterprise activities, room hire etc) collapsed during Covid-19, which, coupled with an increase in service demand, placed strenuous pressure on organisations. Declining mental wellbeing and increased mental health problems were identified as a consistent challenge in society resulting in increased referrals to and demand for Third Sector organisation's services.



CHALLENGES AND AMBITION FOR GROWTH

CHALLENGES

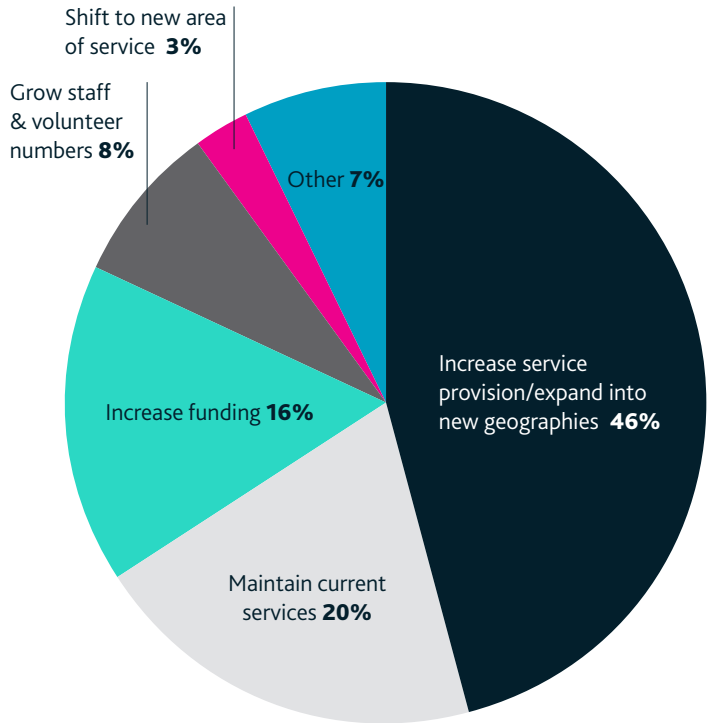
The two biggest challenges facing the Third Sector in the coming years are the cost-of-operating (33% of respondents) and funding (33% of respondents). A quarter of respondents stated that meeting the demand for services was an additional challenge with no other issue appearing in any materially significant fashion.



AMBITION

This is an ambitious sector with 46% of those surveyed expressing a wish to grow either by providing new services, operating in new geographies or both. 20% stated that their focus will be to maintain the services that are currently being provided with 16% stating that their ambition will focus on increasing funding in the coming years. 8% said they would be specifically focussing on increasing staff and volunteer numbers.

Just 3% stated that they would expand into an entirely new area of service with other responses not statistically significant.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

The challenges faced by the Third Sector will mirror other sectors, but with the cost-of-living issues many of these organisations may experience a further increase in demand for their services, while also trying to tackle increased operating costs. However, the ambition of the sector remains large, where growth is a key aim across many groups.



**VALUING
OUR SECTOR**
The CO3 Annual Conference 2022

CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY 1 LEADING THE CONVERSATIONS THAT CHANGE LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

David Babington, Chief Executive,
Action Mental Health



In 2014 Action Mental Health commissioned a piece of research into mental health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland. One of the most shocking findings was that mental health in Northern Ireland received 27% less funding per head of population than in England, and lagged behind Ireland, Scotland and Wales too.

Addressing this deficit in support for mental health has been a difficult challenge, but there have been changes, which are welcomed by Action Mental Health Chief Executive David Babington: "I'm delighted to say we now do have a strategy in place, we have a Mental Health Champion in place and I think generally people are much more prepared to talk about mental health and tackle the whole issue of stigma, which is one of the positive things to be said about where we are with mental health."

"Having said that, we started from a very low base in terms of tackling mental health. There are so many issues that need to be tackled and it's not just in terms of the people who are referred to us from the Health Trusts. It's also out in the community and it is people in workplaces who are feeling stressed and pressurised, and particularly over Covid with all the upheaval of lockdown."

Action Mental Health was formed in Downpatrick over 60 years ago, and they now provide services right across the region. They provide assistance to people recovering from mental health, as well as therapy, counselling and resilience at work programmes, which help those who have issues or anxieties to overcome them through the development of new coping skills.

With a staff of 250 working across 14 sites, David sees the success of Action Mental Health as a regional delivery service being as a result of the strong connections they have with the community. "We're very close to our community and we're able to stay in touch with them and really know their needs. We have 14 sites and, while all of those effectively deliver the same type of services, each is very different. We're very attuned to the needs of local councils, local communities, and we're plugged into all

sorts of groups. We're also plugged in with all our partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector.

"When it came to Covid we were very close to understanding the particular needs of the local population and we were able to respond very quickly because we knew that there were particular nuances in local areas."

Mental health has always faced a stigma, and many recent campaigns have been about addressing that and encouraging people to talk about their mental wellbeing. For David this is a really important issue for the whole community.

"Good mental health and wellbeing helps to bind people together. One of the big things that we are doing is encouraging people to talk about their mental health, talk about wellbeing and not be frightened to reach out and say 'Look, I need a bit of help here'. We can give them a bit of help by teaching them new coping skills. And I think that does bring society together and brings our region together, being open and honest about these things and saying that collectively we will deal with these things."

Delivering a public facing, regional service requires significant funding, and that can be complex. David tells us more: "For an organisation like ours and of our size, we have about 40 different pots of funding. We also reach out to communities for fundraising, which is fantastic. But those contracts that we hold with Commissioners and with other funding sources are our core and they help us deliver our core services."

Good mental health and wellbeing helps to bind people together. One of the big things that we are doing is encouraging people to talk about their mental health.

I don't believe the Third Sector is valued enough. I do believe that is because we don't shout enough about what we do.

Brexit has impacted on one key funding source for Action Mental Health and many other organisations. "A particular issue at the moment is the European Social Fund which provides a foundation for about 52 organisations in Northern Ireland to be able to deliver their core services. Clearly it has been caused by the lack of access to EU funds because of Brexit, but that was back in 2016. Unfortunately we Government't seen much serious thinking about how that's going to be replaced. Uniquely, those funds for all the 52 providers and the 66 programmes that are delivered under ESF were delivering cross departmental outcomes in most cases, and we all got on and did that work unseen and unheard of."

"We have grave concerns that funding is going to end at the end of March and yet there's no potential replacement funding on the horizon. The key priority would be the clarification about European Social Funding."

David sees Action Mental Health and the other charity and voluntary groups as playing a vital role in Northern Ireland, but knows that there are significant challenges too, such as increased operating costs. "Like every organisation we're going to need

support and I hope that any support that's forthcoming to the private sector, who are understood as the organisations that generate wealth within Northern Ireland, is also provided to our sectors who provide vital support."

Looking at why the community and voluntary sector doesn't always get the recognition it should, David thinks it needs to make more noise.

"I don't believe the Third Sector is valued enough. I do believe that is because we don't shout enough about what we do. We tend to get on with what we do and sadly it will be when we're gone that people suddenly realise actually these organisations were absolutely vital to delivering core services."

"Giving society a collective focus. Bringing us together. Ensuring that we can talk together with the right language. Breaking down really difficult barriers. Starting difficult conversations. Those sort of things are what we were are uniquely good at."





CASE STUDY 2 A CHILD'S BEST FRIEND

Geraldine McGaughey,
Chief Executive, ADNI



A chance viewing of a local news story when on holiday led Geraldine McGaughey down a new path, where dogs became a central part of her whole life. As a social worker, Geraldine knew the difficulties faced by children with autism and the impact that it had on their families. But when she saw how trained assistance dogs were being used in England to support these children and the positive outcomes they were achieving, she returned home with a goal of ensuring that four legged friends could help children in Northern Ireland. And this is how Assistance Dogs NI was created.

On paper, what the charity does is straightforward. They identify people who can foster and train puppies to be Assistance Dogs, and supervise the training, as Geraldine explains.

"For an autism assistance dog the training is about 12 months, while for a disability assistance dog it is 16 to 18 months, because it's much more specific in terms of being trained to open and close doors, load and unload the washing machine, retrieve named items. It's a lot more complex. For autism, basically they just need to be able to have a good recall and to be able to obey their commands."

The charity currently has about 37 dogs which are working with families, while a number have already served and been retired. The impact the dogs have on children and families is huge.

These dogs are the best anxiety buster and motivator. They basically change and transform lives.

"These dogs are the best anxiety buster and motivator. They basically change and transform lives. Whenever the children are happy and content, that has a ripple effect for the parents. All family dynamics are completely changed. In most situations parents are having to go out separately, because the child who is on the spectrum may not be able to cope with all the sensory overload. But with the dog, it reduces

anxiety and the families can go out as a family unit and actually do the things that normal families do," says Geraldine.

Through word of mouth, demand for Assistance Dogs has grown, with more than 1200 families enquiring how they could get a dog. Finance to do this is a significant obstacle, but the issue of training the dogs is central to meeting the demand. Geraldine highlights the major problem: "We don't have the foster carers, because it's very hard to find those individuals who are able to commit for 24/7 for 12 months training and then hand the dog over."

With high demand and difficulty training dogs, Geraldine needed to come up with a way to increase the training programme. A conversation with a mother of a child with autism led her to a solution: "One mother said as long as she had a dog as the companion, the companionship makes such a difference to her daughter and I said well, would you consider taking on a pup and we would help you train the pup for your daughter? She said yes. And that is how the Family Member Fostering Programme came about."

In December 2021, the first set of training pups in the Family Member Fostering Programme joined their new families, and the mums and dads have been learning how to train the pups, under the tutelage of Geraldine and her team.

Among those who joined the programme was Leanne Mullan, whose son Ben has autism. She explained her rationale for joining the programme: "As a family we weighed up the pros and the cons of this. I just kept in my head the bigger picture. I could see the benefits that Maggie could bring to the family so we signed up and on the 18 December we received Maggie, at twelve weeks old. She'll be 1 on the 18th September and she's fully qualified as an assistant dog.

"Maggie is absolutely life changing for us. It's a lot of simple things that I suppose a normal family would take for granted. For us as a family, we couldn't get in their car and go for a day out because it was just out of Ben's routine and it just impacted him so much. This is the first Summer we have been able to head out as a family because

Assistance Dogs is such a small charity, but there is such a huge need for what they do.

we've had Maggie with us. She's been in the car with us and just having her out walking alongside Ben, he's content and just so proud walking her that he forgets that it's not part of his routine."

The benefit goes much further than being able to get out and about. Before Maggie, Leanne could not get Ben to talk about school, but she started to encourage him to tell the dog about his day. After some encouragement, Ben started to talk to the dog, with Leanne discreetly listening outside the room. It was through these chats that they learned Ben was being bullied in school. "Perhaps he felt that telling me or my husband that this was happening at school, maybe he was going to get in trouble. But he did eventually confide in Maggie. We went to the school and thankfully they were very accommodating. The principal and classroom assistant were very good and we got the problem resolved very quickly, thankfully. But without Maggie, it may still be going on and we would never know anything about it."

Emma Duddy also joined the member fostering programme in 2021, and the impact it has had on her family has been life changing too.

"Since getting Marvel our family dynamic has changed. Relationships have improved. The boys interact with each other more. Each takes time with Marvel, they each have their own time. Now they don't get angry with each other, they can actually sit beside each other now. It is life changing for us. This time last year, we were in a dire situation. Even my own mental health had been affected because of it all. But Marvel changed our whole outlook.

"I've made friends at Assistance Dogs with people who are going through similar situations. When you're a parent of a child with special needs, you can sometimes feel like you're on your own and nobody

understands, or you're being judged for the way that you parent. Now I have somebody who I know understands what I'm going through and we can bounce off ideas, things that have worked for her, things that work for me."

The future funding of the charity is something that Geraldine always has a focus on, and without a core funder they have to look to other ways of ensuring a regular funding stream. Five years of Big Lottery funding ended 2020, and they looked to see how they could address this, as Geraldine explains: "We knew that we didn't want to fall off the edge of the cliff in December 2020, so we set up our first social enterprise and we opened a charity shop. That allowed us to build up reserves and thankfully we seem to be managing at the minute, but we are totally reliant on the income coming in from the charity shop and also the income coming in from the canine therapy programme."

The need for support for organisations like Assistance Dogs NI is clear to Emma: "Assistance Dogs is such a small charity, but there is such a huge need for what they do. The times that we're living in are difficult and are only going to get more difficult and people will be turning to those small charities more, so they need our support. From our experience of Assistance Dogs and the small charity that they are, they've been life changing for us."

To explain exactly how a small charity which trains dogs can have a positive impact, Geraldine McGaughey tells the story of Echo:

"When Echo was placed on his very first day, he worked with a child who was very close to being expelled from school. He had two classroom assistants and the teacher and they still couldn't manage the child. I said 'use Echo as a motivator - good work, good behaviour, and you'll get to see him at lunchtime and the same in the afternoon.' I went down the next day and the classroom assistant said, 'Echo has done what no human is able to do.'

"As a result of Echo's input they now were able to redeploy that second classroom assistant and they are now at the stage where that young person doesn't need that input. The upkeep of the dog was £1500. Where would you get someone that would work for £1500 a year and affect so much change? Our dogs are giving people hope."





CASE STUDY 3

THE SHOCK ABSORBER FOR WHEN THINGS FOR WRONG

Fiona Magee,
Deputy Chief Executive, Advice NI



The rules and regulations within the welfare and benefit system can be complex, so it is no surprise that an organisation such as Advice NI deals with a huge volume of enquiries each year. That the number was almost 250,000 last year shows the significant role they have to play and the importance of support for those going through the benefit application process.

"I think it's a lifeline for many people," according to Deputy Chief Executive, Fiona Magee. "Many people don't know their rights and entitlements, and the system is very complex and quite burdensome at times. We are helping people to be able to understand legislative regulations and help them to understand how they can basically access and exercise their rights."

The remit of Advice NI goes far beyond benefit advice, and covers tax, personal and business debt, as well as the European Union settlement scheme helpline. They also have a network of 60 members across Northern Ireland, who advise on issues such as benefits and housing. They play a key role in shaping policy, engaging with politicians, and leading campaigns to ensure that the most vulnerable are safeguarded and policy initiatives are in the best interest of those most in need.

While the cost of living crisis is a central thought for every household at the moment, Advice NI is concerned about the impact this will have on the enquiries they receive.

Fiona explains: "We are seeing the impact of the cost of living crisis already and we would expect to see that impact continuing for a few years at least. We believe that the recession is going to cut very deep. We are seeing people who are choosing between heating and eating, people who need access to food banks, people that wouldn't normally have used our services, people in employment that are now really struggling to manage all of their outgoings, again through no fault of their own."

"We've seen an increase in our debt advice services. Last year we dealt with £21.7million worth of debt and that's going to be significantly increased as we go

forward. The advice sector is like a shock absorber for when things go wrong and we are there, ready to pick people up."

With such a large number of enquiries and a wide reaching network, Advice NI ensures that they measure their impact, both economically and socially. Fiona tells us more: "We have a range of measures to look at the social and economic impact. We do surveys with clients to indicate how their confidence has increased, how their lives have changed as a result of access to advice services, how their income has increased, where they are in terms of debt management payments, and how their health has been impacted as a result of using the services."

The advice sector is like a shock absorber for when things go wrong and we are there, ready to pick people up.

"The social value is in terms of building people's confidence, enabling them then to exercise the rights themselves and advocate for themselves, as well as knowledge sharing within their communities and families. It also breaks down the stigma of accessing advice services or being in debt."

"From an economic value point of view, whenever someone has benefit back-pay, that money goes back into the local community and local economy because they spend that within their own communities."

Northern Ireland has high levels of digital exclusion, and with so many Government related services being delivered online, this is concerning for many vulnerable people. The shift in how services were delivered though the Covid lockdown only increased this divide. This is an area where Fiona feels more action is needed at Government level, but the advice sector is already taking steps to support people. "We need some schemes here to help address the digital poverty in Northern Ireland. Currently volunteers

within the sector and the digital volunteers are required to give a minimum of five hours back to the community in terms of raising digital skills and we would engage with them to look at how that's being impacted in their communities."

With energy costs rising and as we enter the winter months, there will be concern about what support will be available for the rising number of households struggling with costs. The need for action is clear for Fiona: "The lack of the Northern Ireland Executive is impacting on the decision making process. And we need to have local schemes running supplementing whatever comes from the rest of the UK."

Advice NI has been successful in delivering programmes to help during difficult financial periods, and remain ready to play their part in helping people through this period. "From our experience of Benefit Uptake campaigns, we could undertake such a campaign for low paid workers. It would require a small financial commitment and the benefit of it would be that the money coming in would be coming from the Treasury, so it wouldn't impact on the Northern Ireland block grant. That would be one way of helping people in low paid jobs to try and get through the cost of living crisis."

Another key area Fiona sees as requiring Government intervention is with immigration advice: "There's nothing in Northern Ireland to support immigration advice and that's something we think that the Departments should come together and look at. It is an area where it's near impossible to access a private solicitor or an experienced regulated advisor. And some of those people are the most vulnerable. With 4000 undocumented people in Northern Ireland, there's nothing there to support those people."

Like so many in the community and voluntary sector, Fiona knows the value the sector brings: "I think the volunteer community sector is the backbone of society in Northern Ireland. It's there as a network to support the most disadvantaged and ensure that they are safeguarded, that they're protected and that they have access to rights and entitlements, and

that they are treated fairly. I think without the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland people would be very disadvantaged. But the sector needs the resources. It does act as a coordinated voice for the underrepresented and that's needed now more than ever."

"From a service user's point of view, if Advice NI didn't exist there would be an increase in poverty levels in Northern Ireland, there would be an increase in mental health issues. There would be a lot more people that wouldn't have the money in their pockets to be able to survive. There would probably be a lot more homeless people, a lot more crime. It would contribute to a decline in society overall. The voluntary sector and the independent advice sector play a key role in joining up some of the dots and providing that holistic nature of service that we provide."

The volunteer community sector is the backbone of society in Northern Ireland.





CASE STUDY 4

FOCUS ON TACKLING CHALLENGES WITH INNOVATION AND DELIVERY

Richard Spratt, Chief Executive,
Cancer Focus



With one in two people receiving a diagnosis in their lifetime, cancer has a huge impact on communities across Northern Ireland, which makes the role of organisations like Cancer Focus extremely important. Having been formed in 1969, they are one of the longest established cancer charities, and their reach is considerable.

As a general cancer organisation, they work right across the cancer spectrum, as Chief Executive, Richard Spratt explains: "Our work runs from investing in research to lobbying politicians, from informing legislation to running cancer prevention and health promotional campaigns, and also, importantly, providing patient care services right here in Northern Ireland. In terms of our health promotional messaging and cancer prevention campaigns, we would be reaching upwards of 100,000 people in Northern Ireland every year with really important messaging about how to prevent cancer."

The charity works with between 5000 and 6000 patients on an annual basis, providing practical support and services, and they are now coming back to the level of contact that they would have had pre-Covid.

Like many across the charity and voluntary sector, for Cancer Focus the challenges of Covid had to be faced quickly, to ensure the smooth continuation of essential support. Richard explains how innovation helped: "There was lots of innovation from a Cancer Focus perspective during the pandemic. We were really creative in terms of keeping our services going and doing what we can do to maintain our portfolio of service offering. Obviously, as with any organisation in any sector, there are economic realities in terms of meeting cost and certainly it won't be without challenge going forward."

Even as a large charity, the economic reality and the impact this could have on service delivery is something that is to the fore of Richard's mind as they look towards the next few years:

"We have a cost of living crisis here and a lot of organisations in the sector are working at the coalface of that, trying to support people who are in a vulnerable

position. With the war in Ukraine and other economic factors, as well as just coming through Covid, I think it is going to be a very challenging year or two ahead. It has the potential to have a negative impact on service delivery going forward, but what I find is that in this sector there's lots of creativity.

"We have a funding mix here that relies predominantly on voluntary contributions from the public. So without the generosity from the public, we wouldn't be able to provide the service that we do. We get some statutory funding from Government to provide certain services each year, but that would be 10% to 15% of what we require overall to provide our services."

Richard sees public engagement as key to ensuring the vital financial support Cancer Focus relies on continues, as well as expansion into the private sector. This goes beyond financial support, with knowledge exchange also being a major benefit. His own background in corporate finance means he has a strong insight into how the private sector operates: "Corporate partnerships are something that we're involved with, and having come from the corporate sector I love the opportunity to engage our colleagues in the private sector, because they get the opportunity for a glimpse and a snapshot into what the Third Sector does. I think there's always opportunities for partnership and for synergy in terms of skills overlap."

The Third Sector makes a huge contribution to society here in Northern Ireland and is sometimes not always appreciated or valued.

As Richard sees it, part of the connection with the private sector is to help them recognise the value of the charity and voluntary sector, and the impact it has. "I think there is a huge opportunity in our sector to really impress and advocate for the role of volunteering in Northern Ireland,

If we didn't exist I think Northern Ireland would be a poorer place for cancer patients.

as well as to provide opportunities to serve and do something different from the 9 to 5 day job. The Third Sector makes a huge contribution to society here in Northern Ireland and is sometimes not always appreciated or valued."

The impact of Cancer Focus on their service users cannot be underestimated, and it is the stories that patients tell that really highlights the value of Cancer Focus for Richard: "One of the things that I enjoy most is to listen to patients that have used our services and to hear that we're meeting people at their greatest point of need. Having received a cancer diagnosis or availing of our support during the treatment pathway, sometimes we've heard that's been life saving for patients. If we didn't exist I think Northern Ireland would be a poorer place for cancer patients."

The lack of Government is something Richard identifies as a challenge that could inhibit how key issues are addressed locally: "I think there's an opportunity to have

more meaningful relationships and more meaningful partnerships both in terms of planned delivery of service, and actual recognition and value of what we and other organisations within the sector provide. There are mechanisms and forums that could be established to assist with that, to foster better communication and better planning. The absence of Government here is a huge problem for ourselves and for other organisations and the sooner that situation is rectified the better.

"Take health. There are a lot of issues that crosscut in terms of health and wellbeing. For example, health inequalities - looking at areas of higher social deprivation, looking at multi agency approach, where there are issues that from a health promotional point of view are about preventing the incidence of cancer, but can actually speak to other issues as well. There's opportunity for a more joined up and a more coordinated approach going forward."





CASE STUDY 5 HELPING MICRO- BUSINESSES MAKE THEIR MARK

Dr. Mark McKinney, Treasurer,
Enterprise Causeway



For 35 years Enterprise Causeway has been supporting micro-businesses and startups from right across the Causeway area. For Mark McKinney, this support has been a major factor in the longevity of so many businesses and has helped maintain micro and small businesses as major employers across the region.

"We would see ourselves delivering business plans, supporting our micro-businesses, helping them to pull together funding applications, helping them to develop their plans and helping them build their businesses. In any given year we're delivering between 140 and 160 new business startups. There have been thousands that have been through our organisation over the years.

"For a small business it's quite nerve-racking when you're setting up and it is important to have a local agency that can help and support you, that you can come to, that is on your doorstep."

Enterprise Causeway has more than 13,000 square feet of accommodation for businesses in Coleraine, Ballycastle, Kilrea, Bushmills and Ballymoney, as well as incubator units which offer a wraparound service to help businesses get up and running. A big part of this is making the early stages of starting a business affordable, and rent is a big part of costs for new businesses.

Beyond the physical support, the start ups are able to benefit from the expertise of Enterprise Causeway, not least board members like Mark. The outcome is a better rate of business survival, which Mark is proud of: "We have noticed that with the support and the wraparound for new businesses, failure is reduced. The first two to five years in a new business are extremely difficult and a lot of businesses, perhaps up to 50%, fail in those first two to five years. We are trying to help them through those challenges. Therefore we see more businesses going into their sixth and up to tenth years. Without the support I do believe you'd find that the stats show that a lot more would be failing."

Going beyond the general startup support, Enterprise Causeway has looked at where more targeted support could be used for emerging sectors. Five years ago they

started to look at how the craft sector could be grown, and working with artists and designers they now have 80 small businesses in that sector. It was a simple, but effective, intervention according to Mark: "By creating the right space in the right environment, we drive innovation within our local community and we drive innovation within our business community in particular, which is fantastic for them, creating new products and helping each other.

With the support and the wraparound for new businesses, failure is reduced.

"When you talk to these crafters, they really don't value themselves or value what they do as being unique or special. Then when you see them attaining a bigger value for the product that they're producing, the value in themselves and the value in the local community, that has a big impact. We have artists who would have been selling their paintings at very minimal levels and suddenly they sell their first painting for £1000 or £1500. It's a very different feeling for them."

The initial plan of supporting the local craft sector, which has proven popular with tourists, has now grown to the development of a new centre in Bushmills. With £6.5m in European funding secured to renovate the Courthouse in the town, this will become a community space, along with pods for young designers, as well as businesses in the micro food sector.

"The micro food and micro craft sector is really big in Northern Ireland. Bushmills is such an amazing point of contact for a lot of tourism coming through to the Causeway and the Distillery, that has become one of our projects that we're looking to deliver by 2024," says Mark.

While they have a funding stream through the rental income, Mark remains concerned about how they will continue to fund projects in the future.

"It's a real challenge. A fair bit of our funding comes from the rental of our units. We also get some funding in from the Enterprise Northern Ireland Network, where we have particular programmes to deliver on behalf of the local Council or central Government.

"We also have programmes that previously were funded by the EU. Now those are all going to be set aside. So the funding gap is something we've been quite concerned about for the last few years. Because Northern Ireland is still part of Europe but also isn't part of Europe, it is a very unusual position. We'd love to get some clarity around how that funding gap is going to be addressed by our politicians.

"As a charity, and with the funding that we raise from our business units, we will continue to fund as much as we can for clients in the local area, which is the micro-business sector and will always be. But without that good wraparound support that we can offer, it means that business failures will increase. And that is going to be to the detriment of our communities and to the detriment of the economy in general, because every pound we can bring in from the tourist spend or from other business spend is spent locally."

Rather than waiting to react to financial pressures, Enterprise Causeway has been innovating all along to keep costs down for their tenants, and they invested in solar panels across a number of their buildings some time ago: "We've put in a lot of solar panels over the last five years. So that has helped to keep some of the electricity costs down, and some of our businesses are availing of that."

While the model Enterprise Causeway is built on has been successful, there remain key issues that Mark would like to see addressed by a new NI Executive.

"We'd love some security around our funding with regard to delivery for business startups in the micro-business sector. At the minute, it's a bit of an unknown for us and we're not quite clear where Government is going to go with that and how they're going to deliver that through a funding model that could be used by organisations like ours."

Mark isn't in the business of seeking

plaudits, but he is clear on the impact Enterprise Causeway has and that it should be more widely recognised.

In any given year, we're delivering between 140 and 160 new business startups.

"They don't see the 160 people that we talk to every year to start up here. This is the startup business sector. We also have our Exploring Enterprise, which is for people who are unemployed or people who are maybe only working 15 hours a week. Here they can explore Enterprise in a safe environment without actually setting the business up, or maybe they will go on to set a business up. We spent 14,600 hours last year delivering programmes and working with our community. So it's a big impact and it does more than just business. It's the mental health impact, it's raising people's hopes and keeping them up there. I think that's missed sometimes."



AN **EXTERNAL VIEW** OF THE **Third Sector**

AN **EXTERNAL VIEW** OF THE **Third Sector**

Alongside our field research across the sector and the detailed case studies, we also wanted to get some insight into how the sector is regarded by wider society.

We engaged with a number of people with an interest in and experience of working with CO3 member organisations. These one to one interviews were conducted with individuals from a range of backgrounds including academia, media, business and Government. Each was recorded separately and in this section of the report we highlight the observations and conclusions which were most consistent across the interviews.

In some cases individual comments are reported but not attributed.



THE VALUE OF THE WORK OF THE SECTOR

There is a widely held support for and acknowledgement of the importance of the work carried out by organisations in the Third Sector. This support applies to organisations of all sizes and across the various sectors in which they operate. There is also an appreciation that Third Sector bodies operate right across Northern Ireland.

Given the fractured nature of our society here arising from the conflict, there is an acknowledgement that Third Sector bodies have even more of a role to play in Northern Ireland than in other jurisdictions; that a community network was born out of circumstances and necessity. It is the case that we are not as yet what might be regarded as a 'normal society' and in those circumstances the work of the charitable bodies and community organisations is even more

important here than elsewhere. The volume of Third Sector organisations is bigger here than elsewhere across these islands.

Third Sector organisations are able to be more dynamic and innovative than public bodies. They are less held back by administration and public system bureaucracy. Their connections to the communities they operate in and serve means they can be quick to identify a need and respond to it. This is an advantage which needs to be protected and enhanced.

Third Sector organisations are more trusted by the public than Government organisations, people respond better to services delivered by local people, neighbours friends and relatives.

Quotes

These organisations do very important and valuable work, especially for vulnerable people.

The Third Sector can be imaginative, innovative due to their connections to local community. Local groups know their neighbours and what their needs are. That part of their work could be scaled up and should be highlighted more by CO3.

The community & voluntary sectors step in and provide vital services, they step in when Government isn't delivering. The Government needs to recognise this more.

Local groups and charities are the heartbeat of local communities especially rural areas.

THE THIRD SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT

On the relationship between Third Sector bodies and Government there is some question whether an organisation can be truly independent while relying on Government funding. Such a situation can dilute independence. In that situation where the body also claims to have a campaigning or advocacy role, there is a conflict.

There is also a view that in too many cases Government bodies 'use' Third Sector bodies to deliver services and programmes which should lie within Government. This

can happen when the Government is looking for an inexpensive option.

The relationship between the sector and Government needs to be re assessed. There is a direct line into the Department for Communities but, agreement broadly that in reality the sector interacts with and delivers on priorities of a range of Departments and perhaps even every Department. The Third Sector bodies can also have a role in assisting a new Executive to deliver on Programme for Government outcomes.

The sector can become more strategic, to work with Government in leadership roles to deliver outcomes of the Programme for Government.

Quotes

The Third Sector should not simply deliver those services which Government should be delivering but does not. This lets Government off the hook to easily and allows Departments to ignore their responsibility.

In Britain campaigning groups are more vocal and more effective in highlighting and getting action on issues like waiting lists. No one group is really advocating on that specific issue, they are too tied to the Department.

Commercial businesses would be contracted to do similar work, but Government goes for the grant mode. Government needs to respect the sector more. But the sector needs to be clearer with Government what they can deliver.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE THIRD SECTOR?

Other sectors are quick to say what value they bring to the economy, it happens in the arts world, hospitality, tourism. That status and credibility has been earned through years of lobbying and advocacy. There is a need for the community and voluntary sector to claim that space too, through CO3 or a coming together of

similar organisations. The gap is there - which organisation will step up and claim the space.

There is no clear brand identity or coherent message from the sector. They need to define their mission statement better.

Quotes

There is some potential for confusion around the work of some representative bodies - CO3, NICVA, Rural Development Council. Can these organisations coalesce around a key demand of Government? Is a merger of similar organisations ever likely?

CO3 have a progressive approach, where collaboration is encouraged.



OTHER ISSUES

There is a consistent view that the emerging cost-of-living crisis will harm the Third Sector and even endanger the services which organisations deliver. There is a perception abroad that such groups are reliant on fundraising activities and the generosity of the public which will be stretched in the months and years ahead.

There is a widely held view that in some sectors there is over provision and

duplication of delivery by a multitude of groups. The cancer charities, groups campaigning for older people and hospice care were all highlighted in this regard.

Some organisations appear to access funding much more easily than others. An apparent lack of transparency in how funding is secured and dispersed was also raised.

Quotes

Groups can be useful vehicles for researching new programmes or initiatives, but too often new programmes are dropped or not sustained at the end of a trial funding period.

The sector doesn't Government't strong enough partnerships internally or externally.

In areas such as training, they are providing a service, but it is not enough to take participants the next level. There needs to be a bridge to help take this to the statutory providers of training, so that it can move people on, with new skills, to social economy or private sector jobs.

There is a weak policy framework, which means that the link up across sectors isn't encouraged, and short term work for the sector is prioritised over strategic planning.

Community ownership has been a hindrance, as it has meant they become territorial and focused on their own future rather than the outcome for users.

The more cancer groups there are the more divided their voice is, and it becomes easier to ignore. Government would not welcome the emergence of one united spokesperson, they would get too much coverage and

have too much authority.

The sector suffers from duplication of service. More collaboration would bring benefits, and could help delivery under a more clear commissioning approach.

The sector is flexible and can change at short notice to react to need.

Cross sector working would improve the sector. Working on co-design and co-production would help grow rather than see it competing, and would bring solutions to the table.

Some groups spread themselves too thinly, by trying to offer too many services at once. They should concentrate on their one key area and specialise in it.



**VALUING
OUR SECTOR**
The CO3 Annual Conference 2022

OUR RESEARCH PARTNER BIOS

CO3
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Tony Clarke & Company

Tony is a certified public accountant. He has in depth and detailed knowledge of the charitable sector including working with a range of funders and grant making bodies. Tony has a unique understanding of the wider sector and has a wealth of experience

working with CEOs and Boards/trustees assisting with organisational budgets, preparing, and presenting management accounts and payroll workings. Tony also provides a finance training workshop and seminars.



Community Finance Ireland

Community Finance Ireland is a charity, a social enterprise and is the fastest-growing dedicated social finance provider across Ireland and the UK. CFI operates across the entire island of Ireland with

the aim of creating a world-class community finance system that works tirelessly towards ensuring that positive social impact is felt – not just dreamt.



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We take a specialist approach in all we do. From tailored insurance solutions created by our underwriting specialists to award winning claims service¹ and access to our risk management experts, you can expect something different when working with Ecclesiastical.

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You can find out more about Ecclesiastical and what makes us a different kind of business in our brochure. (<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/why-ecclesiastical.pdf>)

¹ Claims Team of the Year at the 2021 Insurance Post Claims and Fraud Awards



MW Advocate

MW Advocate is a specialist strategic communications firm which established in 2012. The team of four communications professionals have extensive experience working with a broad range of clients including FTSE 100 companies, global energy infrastructure suppliers, large SMEs across Ireland, social enterprises, NGOs, housing associations,

business and trade representative bodies, artisan food and drink manufacturers and independent retailers. MW Advocate specialise in developing bespoke communications strategies and campaigns, which have helped successfully influence legislation, support growth and enhance reputations. www.mwadvocate.com

OUR METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was distributed across Third Sector leaders in Northern Ireland and received 60 responses, therefore n=60.

Total revenue for the Third Sector was calculated using Charity Commission 2021 figures for revenue for all charities in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Gross Domestic Product figure is based on ONS 2020 figures published in May 2020 (NI GDP £48.478bn).¹

Employment, volunteer and trustee figures are based on Charity Commission 2021 total employment, trustee and volunteer figures.²

Total salary value is calculated based on a weighting of full-time and part-time positions based on mean average salary figure from NISRA Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, published on 26th October 2021.³

Additional value generated to the wider economy through salary uses total revenue figure (above)

for charity sector and estimated salary value (above) and calculates contribution using marginal propensity to consume formula calculation. $M = 1 / (1 - MPC)$.

Additional value generated to the wider economy through supply chain uses the total revenue figure from survey responses, considers total supplier spend from survey responses as the marginal propensity to consume, and calculates this using $M = 1 / (1 - MPC)$.

Interviews with sector organisations were undertaken in August and September 2022. XX interviews were undertaken with external representatives from academia, Government, politics, media and business, between July and September 2022.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/regionaleconomicactivitybygrossdomesticproductuk/1998to2020>

² <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-search/?pageNumber=1>

³ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/annual-survey-hours-and-earnings>





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