



Active Citizenship in Ireland

Progress Report 2007 - 2008

and

Action Plan 2008 - 2009

Active Citizenship in Ireland

Progress Report 2007 – 2008

and

Annual Plan 2008 - 2009

Active Citizenship Office
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 619 4558
e-mail: info@activecitizen.ie
Website: www.activecitizen.ie

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Foreword by Minister Carey

As Minister of State with special responsibility for Active Citizenship, I welcome the progress that has been achieved in terms of implementing many of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship. The Taskforce reported in March, 2007 with a number of worthwhile recommendations intended to promote a greater level of civic engagement by all sectors of Irish society.

Since the publication of that Report, Government Departments and other stakeholders have actively pursued active citizenship related activities. In addition to the public-policy responses, there is continuing substantial support for active citizenship initiatives within the educational, corporate volunteer and community sectors.

To assist the implementation of the recommendations, an Active Citizenship Office was established in my Department and I recently announced the appointment of a Steering Group to oversee progress on active citizenship over the next three years.

I wish to thank Mary Davis, Managing Director of Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia, for agreeing to continue working with us on this worthwhile initiative by leading the Steering Group on Active Citizenship.

This Government is committed to supporting communities to sustain and strengthen their capacity to access the significant potential that we have in this country to create better neighbourhoods through partnership. Citizens from all walks of life are increasingly enthusiastic about contributing to their communities. Our role in Government is to facilitate that process and to raise awareness of the importance of investing more time and effort into generating greater civic engagement by all our citizens. I believe that the progress outlined in this Report is just the beginning of a new direction on what we can achieve in the years ahead.

Pat Carey, T.D.
Government Chief Whip
and Minister of State at the
Department of the Taoiseach

PART I

Progress Report 2007 – 2008

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 The Taskforce on Active Citizenship was appointed by the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. in April 2006, with a remit to:
- Consider the extent to which people in Ireland play an active role as members of their communities and society;
 - Identify factors affecting the level and nature of active citizenship in different areas of Irish life;
 - Suggest ways in which people can be encouraged and supported to play an active role.
- 1.2 To this end, the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce were to:
- Review the evidence regarding trends in citizen participation across the main areas of civic, community, cultural, occupational and recreational life in Ireland;
 - Examine those trends in the context of international experience and analysis;
 - Review the experience of organisations involved in the political, caring, community, professional and occupational, cultural, sporting and religious dimensions of Irish life regarding influences, both positive and negative, on levels of citizen participation and engagement;
 - Recommend measures that could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage (i) a greater degree of engagement by citizens in all aspects of Irish life and (ii) the growth and development of voluntary organisations as part of a strong civic culture.
- 1.3 Persons invited by the Taoiseach to serve on the Taskforce were:
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|-------------------------------|---|
| Ms. Mary Davis (Chairperson) | CEO, Special Olympics Ireland |
| Mr. David Begg | General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions |
| Mr. John Bennett | Former Disability Officer, University College Dublin |
| Fr. Harry Bohan | Diocese of Killaloe and Ceifin Centre for Values-led Change |
| Ms. Elaine Bradshaw | Chairperson, Keep Kilkenny Beautiful |
| Ms. Caroline Casey | CEO, The Aisling Foundation |
| Ms. Mary Cunningham | Director, National Youth Council of Ireland |
| Mr. Arthur Duignan | Assistant Director, CREATE |
| Cllr. John Gallahue | Former member of the Governing Body, Limerick Institute of Technology |
| Mr. Gerry Kearney | Secretary General, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs |
| Mr. Sean Kelly | Executive Chairman, Irish Institute of Sport |
| Ms. Maighread Martin | Cathaoirleach, Foras na Gaeilge |
| Mr. Seamus McAleavey | CEO, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action |
| Mr. Dermot McCarthy | Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach |
| Sr. Bernadette MacMahon | Director, Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice |
| Ms. Sylvia Meehan | Senior Citizens Parliament |
| Mr. Bobby Molloy | Former T.D. and Minister |
| The Venerable David Pierpoint | Archdeacon of Dublin |
| Dr. Mary Redmond | Arthur Cox and co-founder of The Wheel |
| Mr. John Trethowan | Business in the Community |

- 1.4 In order to commence a national conversation on active citizenship, the Taskforce embarked on a major public consultation process during July to October, 2006. In the many submissions received by the Taskforce, there was a strong shared view on what the barriers to active citizenship and civic participation were and what needed to be done to support it in the future. On the basis of this evidence, the Taskforce made a number of suggestions addressed to organisations, networks and individuals on participation in active citizenship and also a series of recommendations to Government identifying specific policy interventions to facilitate, encourage and support active citizenship.

- 1.5 In its Report to Government in March, 2007, the Taskforce set out its vision of what it means to be an active citizen in 21st century Ireland and how, through support and encouragement, the numbers of participants in active citizenship and civic engagement can be increased in measurable terms. The Government agreed the recommendations of the Taskforce, in principle. As a first step in the implementation process an Office of Active Citizenship was established on a non-statutory basis in the Department of the Taoiseach. The Government Chief Whip, Pat Carey, T.D., has been assigned special responsibility for the overall direction of the active citizenship initiative. He will be assisted in this regard by a Steering Group, chaired by Ms. Mary Davis.

Section 2: Taskforce Suggestions and Recommendations

2.1 The Taskforce suggested to individuals:

- To spend at least one percent of their time doing some form of community service or activity outside the home that they enjoy. This means just under two hours a week volunteering, coaching, organising or giving a helping hand somewhere. Or alternatively, just the equivalent of a week's work once a year for a one-off project or activity
- To join an activity or group which is working to improve the life of their neighbourhood or tackle some issue in Ireland or overseas. This might mean joining a residents' association, a community development project or a political party.

The Taskforce suggested to groups/organisations issues for consideration:

- The extent to which new people can be encouraged to be involved and responsible in organisations – are they encouraged, trained, recognised?
- Are people from ethnic and cultural minorities particularly welcome?
- Are volunteers effectively thanked and recognised in our organisations?
- Could new and better forms of 'time limited commitment' be developed and how?

The Taskforce suggested to individual businesses to pursue opportunities for engagement with the community, which could include:

- Supporting specific community projects or voluntary activities
- Facilitating periodic secondments of staff to various community and voluntary organisations
- Developing initiatives similar to 'Boardmatch' that connect the skills and resources in the corporate sector with suitable community and voluntary organisations
- Supporting this by developing a database of needs and opportunities for community engagement at local level
- Adopting a system of accreditation and recognition of community engagement by organisations in the business sector and amongst professional firms

The Taskforce suggested to the media to raise awareness and encourage active citizenship, by:

- promoting awareness of community-based activity through, for example, greater coverage of community and voluntary activities in national and local media
- exploring new and innovative ways of connecting and engaging communities, for example, through use of web-based fora and networks, 'Community Challenge'-type events, locally-based media output and new programme initiatives through the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland's Sound and Vision Fund.

2.2 At the outset of its recommendations to Government, the Taskforce emphasised the potential for North/South co-operation. It recommended that the Government should seek to enhance North/South co-operation in as many areas as possible and implementation of the Taskforce recommendations should take account of opportunities to proactively develop an all-island approach.

In the wider context of the European Union, the Taskforce also emphasised the need to develop an understanding of the European dimension of active citizenship, between and among the people of a Europe that is democratic and outward looking and which has a longer experience of ethnic and cultural diversity than Ireland has.

- 2.3 In its recommendations to Government relative to public policy, the Taskforce focused on five key themes which reflected the primary issues raised in the consultation process.

These were:

- Participation in the Democratic Process
- The Public Service and Citizens
- Community Engagement and promoting a Sense of Community
- Education for Citizenship
- Ethnic and Cultural Diversity and the Challenge of Engaging Newcomers

Significant issues were also raised in the Taskforce consultation in regard to the perceived absence of opportunities for civic participation in decision-making about local issues. Accordingly, the Taskforce made a number of recommendations under the theme of:

- Local Civic Participation

Within each of the key themes, the Taskforce identified a number of specific recommendations which it felt would make a difference and which could be implemented in partnership with key stakeholders in the different sectors mentioned in the Report.

The detailed recommendations in respect of public policy and progress on implementation are detailed in Section 4 of this Report.

Section 3: Management and Monitoring

- 3.1 The Government Chief Whip, Pat Carey, T.D., has been assigned special responsibility for the overall direction of the active citizenship initiative. The Minister will be supported in the implementation process by a Steering Group and by the Active Citizenship Office, which has been established in the Department of the Taoiseach.

Membership of the Steering Group appointed by the Minister is as follows:

Mary Davis, Managing Director, Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia (Chair)
Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach
Gerry Kearney, Secretary General, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
Mary Cunningham, Director, National Youth Council of Ireland
Tony Kennedy, CEO, Co-operation Ireland
Sr. Bernadette MacMahon, Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice
Mary Nally, Chairperson, The Third Age Foundation
Colin McCrea, Senior Vice-President, Atlantic Philanthropies
Joyce O'Connor, Chairperson, Digital Hub Development Agency
Conor Harrison, CSPE National Co-ordinator, Curriculum Development Unit
Karin Dubsy, CoastWatch Ireland
Paraic Duffy, Ard Stiurthoir, GAA
Joe Allen, Principal, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

The Terms of Reference of the Steering Group are to:

- Oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship;
- Support the work of the Active Citizenship Office in its functions suggested by the Taskforce;
- Work towards achieving the targets of increased levels of active citizenship.

- 3.2 In terms of management of the implementation process, the Taskforce recommended that:

- An Active Citizenship Office should be established to lead the implementation of the Taskforce's recommendations. This should be established on a non-statutory basis as a cross-departmental team with staff co-located from relevant Departments, as well as appropriate external expertise and support;
- Given the significance and cross-Government nature of Active Citizenship, the Office should report to the Taoiseach who, in the Taskforce's view, would be best placed to ensure continued prioritisation of the agenda, perhaps through chairing a Cabinet Committee of relevant Ministers.

The functions of the Office were proposed to include:

- Developing a three-year implementation plan for the Taskforce's recommendations in consultation with key stakeholders; the implementation plan would identify responsibility for action under each recommendation;
- Work with relevant stakeholders, including the business sector and professional bodies, to implement initiatives in support of Active Citizenship, including proposals arising from the Taskforce's report where appropriate;
- Prepare an Annual Report on progress in implementing the Taskforce report which would be submitted to the Taoiseach; this Annual Report would also be submitted for discussion and consideration at the relevant Oireachtas Committee;

- Convene a Consultative Forum to allow for continued dialogue with representatives of community and voluntary organisations on the issues raised during the Taskforce's work, as well as other issues of concern. This should meet twice yearly and allow for constructive engagement with relevant Government Departments. It should include representatives from the community and voluntary pillar under Social Partnership and the National Community and Voluntary Fora;
- Engage in dialogue with relevant bodies in Northern Ireland to explore opportunities for mutual learning, and joint initiatives in particular areas; Promote and disseminate research and analysis on Active Citizenship, in particular through supporting the establishment of an Observatory on Active Citizenship;
- Consider how to support awareness of Active Citizenship through the media, reflecting the Taskforce's findings.

As part of assessing progress in implementation, the Taskforce recommended setting a number of ambitious but realisable targets to work towards over the coming years as follows:

- To increase the pool of people active in their community by 60,000 each year for the next three years;
- To increase the number of adults engaged in at least one form of 'civic activity' by 60,000 each year for the next three years;
- To reach, by the end of the current decade, a level of at least 60% voter turnout amongst the 18-24 year olds;
- To increase the level of voter participation from the CSO estimate of 75.5% in the General Election of 2002 to at least 80% in all future General Elections, with targeting of areas of exceptionally low turnout;
- To increase the proportion of adults saying that they agree with the statement that they 'can influence decisions affecting your local area' from 54% in 2006 to 65% in 2010.

Section 4: Recommendations and Progress

4.1 The recommendations of the Taskforce in respect of public policy come within the areas of responsibility of a number of Government Departments, namely:

- Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Education and Science
- Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Finance

Following the agreement of the Government, in principle, to the Taskforce recommendations, Departments considered their implications in terms of their own strategic plans, timeframes and resource issues. A number of the recommendations are reflected in the Agreed Programme for Government, June 2007.

This Report reflects progress to date on a number of public policy recommendations, within the themes identified by the Taskforce.

4.2 Participation in the Democratic Process

The Taskforce recommended:

- The establishment of an independent Electoral Commission with a mandate to:
- encourage everyone who is eligible to register and vote in elections through (i) organisation e.g. timing of voting, postal voting, and (ii) appropriate publicity campaigns, explanatory material;
 - support voter education programmes (i) through the formal education system and (ii) in community adult education and other settings with special priority for persons in disadvantaged areas, young people and the growing ethnic and cultural diversity in Ireland;
 - provide data, research and analysis on the issue of political engagement and awareness;
 - The mandate of the Commission should also include either direct oversight of the voter registration process, or an advisory role in relation to management of the register. In this context, the potential of the use of Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSN) to maintain an up-to-date register should be pursued

The Agreed Programme for Government contains a commitment relative to the recommendations to establish an independent Electoral Commission which will take responsibility for electoral administration and oversight, implement modern and efficient electoral practices, draw up revised constituency boundaries, take charge of compiling a new national rolling electoral register, take over the functions of the Standards in Public Office Commission relating to election spending, and examine the issue of financing the political system.

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has appointed consultants to carry out preliminary research on issues arising in relation to the establishment of the Electoral Commission. When inviting tenders, the Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship was identified as a context within which the study is being undertaken to take forward the commitment in the Programme for Government.

The key elements for the study are:

- An overview of the present arrangements for electoral administration in Ireland
- An examination of relevant models of Electoral Commissions in other countries, taking account of relevant international research
- Identification, assessment and ranking of options for an Electoral Commission, including scoping of structure, functions and relationships with other bodies involved in electoral policy and administration, and
- Recommendations concerning approaches to the modernisation and consolidation of legislation in the context of the establishment of an Electoral Commission and to the phasing of its coming into operation. The outcome of the study will, therefore, indicate the options to move forward on the issue.

In terms of education in the democratic processes and voter education programmes, at primary and second levels in schools young people are provided with a grounding in active participatory citizenship. The possibility of incorporating material on education for citizenship, including voter education into adult literacy and community education courses delivered by the VEC sector has yet to be explored.

Also related to public policy initiatives in this theme, the Ceann Comhairle, John O'Donoghue T.D. is leading a wide-ranging communications strategy to make the Dáil and Seanad more relevant to the public. Since launching the schools parliamentary programme in October 2007, the Ceann Comhairle has visited schools throughout the country to engage with students and teachers to promote the importance of politics and the work of politicians. These school visits also involve local T.D.'s and Senators and it complements the work in schools by Oireachtas staff and outreach officers.

The Ceann Comhairle has also engaged with representative bodies including community, cultural and business groups to similarly promote the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Ceann Comhairle welcomed over 8,000 people to Leinster House during the successful Family Day in June 08 which ran for two days and will be held again next year.

Research has been carried out in the last year to get a sense of how people see politicians and what goes on in the Houses of the Oireachtas. It showed that the majority of people knew that TDs worked hard but they didn't know what exactly they did or what goes on in the Dail and Seanad every day. Many people want to know more about the Oireachtas. However 60 per cent of the population of Ireland does not regard its work as important and one in five cannot describe its role and functions. The aim of the communications strategy is to increase public knowledge and raise awareness of what the Houses of the Oireachtas actually do. The strategy involves better information and marketing materials as well as an improved media and public relations programme and a schools programme.

The schools programme:

- A new parliamentary education programme was launched in October 2007 by the Ceann Comhairle, John O'Donoghue T.D. This programme is being delivered to second level students in schools around the country by Oireachtas personnel. The Ceann Comhairle is visiting schools throughout the country to raise awareness about politics and the importance of voting. Dáil and Seanad members, from the relevant constituency, are invited to join the Ceann Comhairle when he visits schools in each county.

- This new second level schools programme has been developed in conjunction with CSPE (Civic Social and Political Education) curriculum representatives from the Department of Education and Science.
- An initial pilot scheme will be put in place in schools spread throughout the country and this will be reviewed and expanded.
- Outreach Officers from The Houses of the Oireachtas are presenting this schools programme and it will be in all schools by next September.
- By the time of the election to the 31st Dáil, young voters will have received an education about the workings of the Oireachtas which has not been available to any generation before.
- The Ceann Comhairle will also use opportunities to speak at conferences and other public events to promote participation in politics and the important work that goes on every day in the houses of the Oireachtas.
- The award winning website www.oireachtas.ie contains 3 million pages – every document since the foundation of the state. This important resource will be made more user friendly to further encourage public interest.
- An enhanced press relations unit will help to better inform the media and the public about parliamentary work.
- The eDemocracy programme will foster greater connectivity to the Parliament and allow members of the public to:
 - Access information sources online leading to a greater understanding of, and engagement with, the parliamentary process
 - The public can make submissions on matters before parliament and its committees in a structured way and contribute to policy consultation and policy formulation online.
- More people will be encouraged to visit Leinster House. Currently, 80,000 people visit Leinster House every year.

4.3 The Public Service and Citizens

The Taskforce recommended:

- that this ethos of public service, based on respect for each citizen, needs to be reinforced and strengthened and continue to be a core objective of public service reforms. This should include a renewed emphasis on effective consultation with associated training for public servants

Government Statement on Transforming Public Services

The *Government Statement on Transforming Public Services*, launched in November 2008, adopts in full the recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Public Service and sets out a three year framework for what amounts to a radical transformation of the Public Service. The Task Force's report endorses the core message of the OECD Review of the Public Service, namely that by working in new ways the Public Service has the potential to deliver significantly improved services and outcomes.

Putting the citizen first is one of the main themes of the *Government Statement on Transforming Public Service* – that the citizen rather than the provider must be at the heart of planning and delivery of public services. It states that 'the Government is committed to reaching out to citizens in new ways, to get their inputs to policy making and into the design and preferred means of delivery of the services of most importance to them. Greater use will be made of public consultations, customer panels, surveys and other means to engage the citizen and we will make special efforts to encourage participation of socially excluded groups and those whose voices are seldom heard. Of course, where we seek input and engagement, we must commit to explaining our decisions'.

The Government Statement stresses that deeper engagement with the citizen as service user will be essential if the Government is to realise its ambition of delivering services which are targeted appropriately at particular groups such as children, the elderly and those with disabilities.

In particular, the Government Statement states that:

- All Public Service organisations will publish a customer charter setting out the service standards which the public can expect;
- All existing charters will be revised to include new commitments to improve specific services;
- Organisations will publish evaluations of their charters and their service delivery which will record customer input and feedback;
- Local Government, as the level of Government closest to the citizen, will be given a leadership role in providing integrated responses to the needs of citizens through case working and other methods, while elected Councils will be the focus for consultation and feedback on all services delivered at local level;
- a database of all publicly-funded programmes and projects will be established and maintained at county level, to avoid duplication and encourage integration;
- the Government will examine the feasibility of putting in place a single “lo-call” number for all public services, using call centres;
- an administrative burden programme for citizens will be introduced to reduce volume and frequency of data required from the public;
- catalogues of services available to specific customer groups e.g. targeting the particular needs of specific sub-groups of children, families, those with disabilities, the elderly and small business to make it easier to access related services will be published; and
- greater use of online services which will benefit the citizen in terms of time and convenience.

Consultation with customers is the first of the four stages of the Customer Charter Initiative, the others being commitment, evaluation and reporting. The 2007 Fitzpatrick Report on Civil Service Customer Charters makes specific recommendations to enhance and strengthen this consultation process and to ensure that the Charter process is embedded further in the wider Public Service. To this end, the *Task Force on Customer Service* was established by Government to strengthen and deepen the Quality Customer Service Initiative in the Irish Public Service. The Task Force is due to submit its final report to Government in early 2009. At the same time, Guidelines for Public Service organisations on the Preparation of Customer Charters and Customer Action Plans were revised in 2008 and can be seen on the Better Government website www.bettergov.ie.

In May 2008, the Department of the Taoiseach commissioned *Ipsos-MORI Ireland* to conduct a survey of general public customers to gauge the level of customer satisfaction with Government Departments and Offices. Surveys like these are useful in benchmarking progress made over a period of time and are a good measure of the real impact of improvements in customer service. The surveys offer an opportunity to look at those areas in which the Civil Service is performing well and also to look at those areas where further improvement is needed. The results of this survey build upon the results of similar Surveys conducted in 1997, 2002 and 2005/6. The results of the 2008 survey can be seen at www.bettergov.ie.

The issue of consultation with the general public and other customers is also promoted by the Public Service Modernisation Division of the Department of the Taoiseach on an ongoing basis in other ways. In addition to addressing citizens' needs through the various elements of the Quality Customer Service Initiative, the Better Regulation Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach published the document '*Reaching Out - Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies*' in 2005.

The Agreed Programme for Government, in the context of Local Government Reform commits to put customer service to the forefront with:

- required response times for correspondence;
- customer friendly opening hours;
- telephone responses from real people, not machines;
- right of appeal or review of local authority decisions for customers as a further step to greater transparency.

The Green Paper on Local Government reiterates the commitment to a Local Authority Customer Service Charter. This Charter will be informed by the recent evaluation of the Customer Charters within the Civil Service, outcomes from the Task Force on Customer Service, the local government reform process as addressed in the Green Paper and the Government Statement on Transforming Public Services.

4.4 The Taskforce recommended:

- that the group insurance scheme open to members of Local Community and Voluntary Fora should be promoted widely amongst relevant organisations and groups.

The group insurance scheme continues in existence following a recent renewal of the scheme.

4.5 The Taskforce recommended:

- an initiative to help community and voluntary organisations meet compliance costs (i) when providing programme funding to include assistance towards meeting those costs especially in the case of small organisations and (ii) ensuring that compliance costs are proportionate and that administrative burdens on community and voluntary organisations are streamlined and standardised across the public service to the greatest extent possible.

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs provides funding towards the cost of compliance with Company Law and other relevant legislation to a broad range of organisations in the community and voluntary sectors. Under its Training Grants Scheme funding is available to groups for training in governance, improved accountability and reporting, etc. Other structures including Partnership companies, LEADER companies and Community Development Projects also receive support. Provision is also made for compliance costs within grants funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

4.6 The Taskforce recommended:

- that funding schemes be strengthened to support capacity development among community and voluntary organisations in the area of training at both national and local level.

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs supports capacity development and training within the community and voluntary sectors through a range of grant supports:

- The Department earlier this year launched a new Training Grants Scheme for national and locally based organisations in the Community & Voluntary sector. Overall funding for this Scheme is set at €3m in 2008. Some €2m is being allocated to the national strand with the balance of €1m allocated to the local or/and community based strand.
- The Local Development Programme provides training and education grants through the local Partnership Companies. These Companies provide training in community development, capacity building, I.T. or any other training priorities identified by the local community.
- The Community Development Programme provides community premises, development workers and capacity building projects to disadvantaged communities in over 180 locations throughout the country. These projects are primarily in the most disadvantaged communities. They play a significant role in building community infrastructure and enhancing the capacity of their communities.
- The RAPID Community Support Budget provides for training and capacity building for all community representatives engaged in the RAPID Area Implementation Teams in their localities.
- The LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 will provide specific funding of €34.63m for animation measures to create awareness, understanding and capacity in rural communities so as to enable their full participation and input into the preparation of local development strategies. Among the activities eligible for funding are capacity building measures aimed at community and minority groups to foster the spirit of social capital and self-help.

4.7 The Taskforce recommended:

- that a programme be introduced in the public service to promote community engagement and participation. This should include (i) recognising and providing some time off for volunteering effort and (ii) treating identifiable areas of community activity and volunteering as relevant items for inclusion and recognition in job applications and evaluations of job performance. This could also promote engagement for people as they move into retirement through pre-retirement courses.

The Civil Service provides for special leave, paid and unpaid, in a variety of circumstances subject to business needs. Special leave is available for civic purposes, for service with charitable organisations, for training with the Defence Forces, for training or call out with voluntary Search and Rescue organisations and for study and examinations. Opportunities for special leave are also provided for employees who have been selected to represent their country in the area of sports. Leave is also provided for volunteer work abroad.

In responding to the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, the Department of Finance determined that granting of special leave to employees during working hours would require specific regulation. Existing special leave arrangements are subject to formal verification and these criteria would also apply to any expansion of the existing arrangements.

In terms of recruitment policies and evaluations of job performance, Departments determine the criteria for selection of staff, while the Public Appointments Service undertakes the recruitment for the Civil Service under Codes of Practice. Central agreements are in place that link the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) with assessments for promotion.

4.8 Community Engagement and Promoting a Sense of Community

The Taskforce recommended:

- the adoption and promotion of a National Active Citizenship theme each year to stimulate local initiatives and events, e.g. "get to know your neighbours", "support for older people". The themes would be selected to mobilise and motivate local community activity, drawing on existing community resources and initiatives. This initiative would culminate in an Active Citizenship week, which would be a focal point for local community engagement.

Initiatives relative to this recommendation will form part of future plans.

4.9 The Taskforce recommended:

- that National Presidential Citizen Awards should be introduced to recognise outstanding contributions to civic and community life. These would be awarded to a limited number of people selected by an independent process, based on nominations by members of the public. Presentation of the awards could act as a focal point for the Active Citizenship Week.

Initial discussion have commenced in regard to developing an appropriate response to the recommendation.

4.10 The Taskforce recommended:

- that Local Authorities should prioritise the provision of community and recreational facilities as part of Development Plans and subsequent planning decisions. An audit of implementation of this approach should be carried out by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and revised legislation introduced, if necessary.

From a legislative perspective, the Planning and Development system already actively supports the provision of community and recreational facilities through a range of regulatory and financial provisions provided for under planning legislation.

It is through the Development Plan (and associated local area plans) process that the requirements for community and recreational facilities must be strategically set out within the County and City Development areas in the first instance.

The most recently issued policy guidance on the preparation of Development Plans (June, 2007) refers to the requirement for the plan to include objectives for "the preservation, improvement, and extension of community and recreational amenities". 'Draft Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' were launched for public consultation in February 2008, with a deadline of 6 May 2008 for receipt of comments. The guidelines highlight the requirement for such developments to include community and recreational facilities.

The Planning and Development Act itself also specifies the types of objectives to be included in development plans. These include recreational facilities and open spaces, specifically including sports grounds and play grounds; provision for landscape protection, preservation of public rights of way; provision of public open space; and provision of recreation space. The Act also sets out authorities powers to raise revenues from the levying of development contributions for the provision of amenities and services within their administrative area. In addition, the recently

commenced Planning & Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 provides for conditions to be attached by An Bord Pleanála in cases of consent for strategic infrastructure development to provide a facility or service that would constitute a substantial gain to a community being affected by such infrastructure.

The housing policy statement *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* sets out a vision to guide the transformation of the housing sector over the medium term, by delivering more and better quality housing responses and by doing this in a more strategic way, focused on the building of sustainable communities.

Identified as a key action in that housing policy statement, the Sustainable Communities Fund was introduced in 2007. The fund will jointly finance local authority spending on a range of practical pilot initiatives, including community regeneration initiatives, tenancy liaison and outreach services and actions to address anti-social behaviour, which have potential for wider replication among housing authorities generally.

The pilot community warden service, which was established in five local authorities in 2002, has been placed on a permanent footing and it is now open to other local authorities to introduce the scheme having regard to local circumstances. Working with community groups and schools, these wardens can act as guardians for the more accessible community facilities. They will help to ensure the upkeep of the local area and serve as a focus for voluntary activity within communities.

The Programme also commits to promoting the development, over a five-year period, of a wide range of local sports facilities around the country, to improve participation and provide healthy social outlets for people of all ages, with specific reference to women in sport. A range of specific measures is identified. Similarly, measures to upgrade sports facilities in schools are proposed, including:

- the promotion of greater sharing of school and community sports facilities and making it a condition of the Sports Capital Programme that facilities be made available to schools where appropriate;
- encouraging more schools to apply for funding under the Sports Capital Programme by collaborating with their local sports clubs and/or community groups.

The contribution of volunteers in local sporting organisations is recognised in the proposal to expand the Volunteer Awards Scheme for persons in sport.

There is also a commitment to provide education and community facilities where new communities are created and specifically to:

- ensure that all children have adequate space for play and access to a modern playground and that teenagers are also catered for by the provision of youth cafes, skateboard parks, etc.

With regard to creating sustainable towns and cities, the commitments will:

- ensure that existing public parks and recreational areas are protected and enhanced and develop a network of “peoples’ parks” and “urban woods” to enhance the experience of living in our towns and cities;
- include in Local Area Plans adequate provision for green areas, play spaces and community space.

4.11 The Taskforce recommended:

- that an audit should be undertaken by end 2008 by Local Authorities through the County/City Development Boards of existing community facilities available for voluntary, sporting, civic or recreational activities to identify (i) gaps in availability based on the needs of the local communities and (ii) opportunities for improved use/sharing of existing facilities.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Sports & Tourism and the Department of the Taoiseach, has requested local authorities to conduct an audit of community, sports and arts facilities under the auspices of the County/City Development Boards, by the end of 2008. The Department of the Environment, in conjunction with the above Departments, has provided extensive guidelines to assist them in carrying out the audit. The Department is also providing €12,000 to each county/city council to assist them in conducting this work. Local audits are to be completed by end 2008 and further consideration will be given to the question of the collation and analysis of the data at national level.

4.12 The Taskforce recommended:

- that better use should be made of schools at evening and weekend times to act as community hubs – facilitating, for example, adult education, literacy programmes, various community activities and services. As a first step, a pilot should be undertaken in a number of post-primary schools in partnership with the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund.

The promotion of school facilities by community groups and other appropriate services is a commitment in the Programme for Government.

Through its Regional Office Service (ROS), the Department of Education and Science has encouraged schools to make their premises available for the use of community and other groups. Advice on the issues and implications for the schools were covered in a circular letter issued to all schools in April, 2005.

A Working Group, involving the National Assessment Committee of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund is currently engaged in the consideration of a pilot programme.

4.13 Education for Citizenship

The Taskforce recommended:

- The expansion of education for citizenship in the school system and in the youth and adult education and, in particular.
- Ensuring that every Transition Year student has the opportunity to take part in an active learning community-based project, building on existing programmes such as the Young Social Innovators (YSI). To contribute to this, participation in YSI should be increased incrementally to make it available to a larger percentage of Transition Year students;
- strengthening the status and role of the Civic Social Political Education (CSPE) Programme in the junior cycle and introducing a citizenship programme as an exam subject at senior cycle;
- include workshops on Active Citizenship/Voter Education as a constituent element in Adult/Community Education Programmes.

The fundamental philosophy underpinning the Transition Year Programme allows a flexible menu of options that expose students to a range of learning opportunities which provide for a strong focus on personal development, collaborative and experimental learning, learning in the community and/or work experience. It is a maturing process and a chance to engage in group work and self-directed learning. There are no plans to make modules compulsory within this approach and the choice of modules will continue to be a matter for decision by local schools.

The Young Social Innovators initiative is available for schools providing the Transition Year Programme and the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs provide funding towards the operation of the YSI programme. While the Department of Education and Science is supportive in principle of the idea of extending opportunities for Transition Year students, given the costs involved, the expansion of initiatives such as the YSI will have to be kept under review.

Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is a mandatory subject and an examination subject at junior cycle, which is assessed through a written paper and an action project. The key aim of the action project is to give students a practical experience of active citizenship. This includes fostering a sense of belonging and awareness of social inclusion and justice issues, a capacity to gain access to information and structures relating to the society in which they live and an ability and confidence to participate in democratic society.

At Senior Cycle, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has also started to develop a syllabus for a new subject "Politics and Society" which is proposed as a full optional examination subject.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is part of the core curriculum for all pupils in primary schools and in the junior cycle of post-primary schools. The SPHE curriculum for primary schools offers particular opportunities, in an age-appropriate way, to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the individual child. Building on the aims of SPHE in the primary school, SPHE at post-primary level provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development.

One strand of the SPHE programme at primary level is "Myself and the wider world". This teaches a sense of social responsibility, active citizenship, appreciation for diversity and interdependence of local, national and global communities. Developing Citizenship is a core element of this strand, from the infant classes through to completion of primary education.

In terms of human rights and citizenship education, this is dealt with in the early stages of primary schooling through the exploration of a child's immediate environment, developing an awareness of how to interact fairly with others, sharing, being aware of emotions and feelings, learning to treat others with dignity and respect, and learning to appreciate difference.

As the curriculum progresses, broader community issues are brought into play, in terms of how individuals and groups contribute to their community, practicing justice and fair play in everyday interactions, becoming aware of diverse groups and the importance of living together in harmony, the role of community leaders and community organisations, civic structures in Ireland and Europe, equal rights and how justice and peace can be promoted between people and groups, nationally and internationally. Poverty, discrimination, prejudice, racism, sustainable development and environmental awareness are themes which feature as part of this approach.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is currently conducting a consultation on a draft curriculum framework for SPHE in senior cycle. The document has been disseminated to schools, health boards, statutory and non-statutory organisations and groups involved in the social, personal and health education of young people.

4.14 The Taskforce recommended:

- that the Higher Education Authority should lead an initiative with appropriate resources to promote, support and link together citizenship initiatives across the Higher Education sector, including “service learning” and volunteering by students.

In 2006, the Government announced the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) as a means to support new approaches to enhance quality and effectiveness within higher education and research. The funding seeks to enhance collaboration between higher education institutions, improve teaching and learning, support institutional reform, promote access and lifelong learning and support the development of fourth level education.

The Higher Education Authority encouraged institutions to consider how they might contribute to a greater sense of active citizenship and contribute to the surrounding community in applications to SIF Cycle I. A total of €42 million was allocated to projects for institutions from the University and Institutes of Technology sectors.

The National University of Ireland, Galway has been awarded €1.4 million in funding (of which half was supplied by the institutions and half by SIF) as a lead institution for a national collaborative programme titled Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship.

The principal objective of the national programme is to increase the number of opportunities students have to engage with the community while studying at third level. To achieve this objective a formal network is being set up to share information and experience on how to embed civic engagement activities in institutions of higher education, and thus increase students’ civic awareness while also opening up the institute to its surrounding community.

The founding institutions include the University of Limerick, National University of Ireland Maynooth, National University College Dublin and Dublin City University. It is envisaged that membership will be open to all higher education institutions in Ireland, on both sides of the border, as the project develops. Since the project commenced earlier this year (2008), a website (www.campusengage.ie) has been put in place that allows prospective student volunteers to browse volunteer opportunities by region, by institution, and by related academic disciplines.

4.15 The Taskforce recommended:

- The development of a certificate award (complementing Gaisce awards) which would be earned through completing at least three months’ volunteering or community involvement activity (in Ireland or overseas). This could be done, for example, through a three month/year “civic engagement” gap during further education or the early stages of working life.

The Department would also see no difficulty in principle in establishing an award system ‘complementing’ that offered by Gaisce – the President’s Award. It should be noted however, that the Gaisce award is for young people between 15 and 25 and that only one of the four task areas for the award relates to active citizenship i.e. completing a community involvement challenge. What is proposed in this recommendation appears to be full-time engagement for a specific period in voluntary activity, unlike the Gaisce Award which is completed in a young person’s leisure time.

A number of higher education institutions have developed, or operate, civic engagement awards. Examples of these include:

- Dublin Institute of Technology – Chairperson’s Medal for Extra Curricular Activities
- Dublin City University – Chancellor’s Medal and ‘Uaneen’ Award Scheme
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth – President’s Medal
- Trinity College, Dublin – Trinity Annual Fund Student Awards
- University College, Cork – Accreditation and Awards
- University College, Dublin – Quinn School of Business ‘Community Engagement Awards’ and President’s Awards for Excellence in Student Activities
- University of Limerick – Alumni Awards
- Waterford Institute of Technology – Community Service Awards

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has updated the Department of Finance on the development of awards and how recognitions may possibly be addressed by the HEA. The Department is satisfied that a workable framework can be introduced within Government Departments/Offices which can support the Taskforce recommendation once the development and recognition of awards/certificates has been addressed by the HEA. The Department intends to further discuss with the HEA at that point.

4.16 Ethnic and Cultural Diversity and the Challenge of Engaging Newcomers

The Taskforce recommended:

- That all forms of community and voluntary organisations should be encouraged to undertake proactive initiatives to reach out and engage with newcomers to Irish society. This should be incentivised appropriately through Government funding programmes.

The Office of the Minister for Integration was established in July 2007 as a response to the recognition of the scale of migration to Ireland in recent years. The functions of the Office include the promotion of integration, the establishment of new structures for this purpose, the management of the resettlement of refugees admitted as part of the United Nations Resettlement Programme and the administration of funding to promote integration from national and EU sources. On 1 May 2008, the Minister for Integration, Conor Lenihan, T.D., published a policy and strategy paper titled, ‘Migration Nation - Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management’, which sets out his approach to his mandate. This approach is in conformity with that advocated in the Report of the Taskforce.

At present, a number of initiatives to support community and voluntary organisations are administered/funded by the Office for Integration. These include the European Refugee Fund and the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. Grants totalling €760,855 and €790,117 respectively were approved under these Funds in the latest call for proposals. The Fund for Initiatives to Support Integration of Legally Resident Immigrants has

provided, in its current phase running from 2008 to April 2009, €1 million to NGOs and Partnerships. In addition, €314,000 has been approved in 2008 under the Immigrant Integration Small Grant Scheme.

Ethnic minorities are a key target group across a range of established Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs initiatives. The Local Development Programme targets ethnic minorities and involves new communities to a significant degree across all training, education, employment services and community development initiatives. Community Development Projects are also required to work closely with the ethnic minorities in each CDP area. The CDP's provide a similar support service to Partnerships, but at a more local level.

Partnerships and CDP's have been to the fore in enabling new communities access language training, IT training, after-schools education projects, welfare and citizens rights information and access to job placement services.

4.17 The Taskforce recommended:

- That a formal ceremony should be introduced which would mark someone's admission to Irish citizenship and allow them to publicly demonstrate their commitment to Ireland.
- That information material and short education courses should be developed on Irish citizenship, which would encompass Irish history, democratic institutions, culture, language and traditions, and be made widely available.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is currently considering this recommendation in the context of the review of the eligibility requirements for the acquisition of Irish citizenship by naturalisation. As part of that review, consideration will be given to the possible introduction of a language test and/or a test based on some recognised form of civic standard.

Language remains a key issue for many migrants seeking to access information and play a more active role in the community. The VEC sector is providing a broad range of supports for newcomer pupils and their families, including English language training for over 12,000 adult migrants. The Department of Education and Science in conjunction with the Office of the Minister for Integration has commissioned an independent review to assist in the development of a national English language training policy and framework for legally resident adult immigrants.

4.18 Local Civic Participation

The Taskforce recommended:

- the County/City Community and Voluntary Fora in each Local Authority should be strengthened and renewed with additional support as required; in particular, they should be organised on the basis of local electoral areas (where this isn't already the case) and these local area fora should be renamed the Civic Fora.
- public agencies at local level should be required to consult the Civic Fora in relation to the development and implementation of their policies at local level

- all Local Authority Area Committees should, in line with guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, include representatives of the Civic Fora for the purpose of community development and also contributing to the work of the County/City Development Board. The Taskforce recommends that this requirement to engage with the Fora should be expanded to further issues
- that where such local structures exist, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government should request Local Authorities to provide recognition under the Local Government Act, 2001, where appropriate
- that where there are identifiable gaps in local community structures (particularly in new and fast-growing urban and suburban communities), Local Authorities should support the establishment of local, civic participation structures; a support scheme, including seed funding, should be made available for this purpose through the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- that challenge funding should be made available through County/City Development Boards to match locally raised funding (including a substantial percentage of non-statutory funding) for suitable projects. The funding could be targeted, in particular, at projects which mobilise communities and local businesses around specific local needs and, in particular, to encourage use of Community Fund provisions, and following a local plebiscite, Community Initiative Schemes
- that Local Authorities should experiment with other forms and modes of local democracy which facilitate community engagement, including use of new technologies, citizens' juries and specific youth-focused engagement

The Taskforce's report identified a democratic deficit at local level and reported, as a constant theme during the Taskforce's consultations, that *"the perceived distance between the citizen and local authority was too great – particularly but not exclusively in urban areas."* Such a disconnect challenges the *raison d'être* of local government, that of representing and serving local communities. Local government, remote from the citizen, cannot effectively serve or represent.

The Green Paper on Local Government, *Stronger Local Democracy – Options for Change* (published on 22 April, 2008), presents a set of options for a more transparent and more responsive system of local government, achieved through strengthened local and democratic leadership.

Chapter 7 of the Green Paper discusses civic participation in local government decision-making and asks whether novel forms of engagement should be tried in Ireland in order to help address the disconnect identified by the Taskforce, using measures such as participatory budgeting, local plebiscites, petition rights and town hall meetings.

Chapter 7 also addresses the development of strengthened relationships between local community groups and local authorities, including by using the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 to promote dialogue between a local authority and a community group, to permit assistance to be given and for the group to work with the council, including by performing non-reserved functions on behalf of the council.

The Active Citizenship Office was consulted during the drafting of *Stronger Local Democracy – Options for Change*. It is intended that the options presented in the Green Paper will excite a broad and deep debate on local government, which will inform the drafting of the White Paper. It is hoped to finalise a White Paper by year-end.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government is open to the principle of challenge funding. However, this is contingent on resource availability.

In addition to proposals under the Green Paper on Local Government, local authorities are already involved in youth-focused engagement through Comhairle na nÓg. The public library service also provides opportunities for community engagement through its ongoing ICT programme which provides a range of facilities to the public, including in particular to disadvantaged communities.

The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has provided increased funding to a network of Volunteer Centres around the country and now funds centres located in Carlow, Cork, Donegal, Drogheda, Dublin City South, Dublin City North, Fingal, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick City, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo, South Dublin, South Tipperary, West Limerick, Westmeath, Wicklow. To date in 2008, these Volunteer Centres have registered over 5,600 volunteers and over 800 volunteer-involving organisations. The network of Volunteer Centres is complemented by a range of practical activities funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to encourage greater active citizenship among key target groups.

The Department also supports measures including:

- The Young Social Innovators Initiative, which involves transition year students at Secondary School level around Ireland in identifying social needs and in developing strategies to address them;
- For the past three years the Department has supported the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) Community Learning Programme. This programme, which was established in 2001, promotes community based learning by integrating classroom theory with practical application in projects for community and voluntary bodies. Examples of projects include computing science students designing web pages for voluntary bodies, or food science students providing health and safety audits in community kitchens;
- Funding for Focus Ireland to support the placement of social science graduates, within the organisation, who wish to gain experience and to develop skills in working with people who are marginalised;
- Support for Boardmatch, an organisation which supports the development of the voluntary and community sectors in Ireland by strengthening boards of management and management committees of non-profit organisations;
- A cross-boarder volunteering initiative with the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland, to pilot action research into how recruitment of volunteers can be encouraged and also to consider how volunteers recruited within different spheres can provide the catalyst for wider community involvement and the development of active communities.

4.19 Initiatives to Encourage Philanthropy

The Forum on Philanthropy was established by Government to deepen and strengthen a culture of Philanthropy in Ireland.

Developments since the establishment of the Forum include:

- Government approval of flagship projects with the private sector to the value of €51 million;
- Publication of Philanthropy Ireland's Guide to Giving;
- The endorsement of increased philanthropic activity by the Taskforce on Active Citizenship
- The establishment of the Social Finance Foundation.

Research is currently being undertaken to determine current levels of philanthropic giving in Ireland. This research will provide a baseline from which the advancement of Philanthropy Ireland can be gauged, as well as informing future policy interventions.

Current activities relating to Philanthropy being led by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs include:

- A review of models and pathways to good practice from abroad has been undertaken by the Department and findings have been submitted to the Forum on Philanthropy.
- This good practice research will inform input by the Forum on possible policy interventions
- The establishment of a network of senior officials from across key Departments to liaise on good practice

4.20 North-South Co-operation

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs supports North-South Co-operation through a range of Programme activities. As the managing authority for various measures under the Peace Programme, the Department is responsible for funding a range of cross-border community development activities. The Department's various grant schemes have supported a diverse range of activities in border counties, which have a strong cross-border dimension. For example, the Department has provided grants for refurbishment of Orange Halls in the border counties at Drum, Breaky, Mullaghboy, etc. and also provides support to the Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Glenree. The Department is in regular contact with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, with a view to maximising the potential for cross-border co-operation. It also meets regularly with organisations such as the Ulster Scots Agency, Foras na Gaeilge and other relevant organisations in order that its activities are fully inclusive and support cross-border co-operation.

The Department has also recently entered into a cross-border volunteering initiative with the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland. The project involves three groups voluntary organisations on both sides of the border and the aim of the initiative is to pilot action research into how recruitment of volunteers can be encouraged and also to consider how volunteers recruited within different spheres can provide the catalyst for wider community involvement and the development of active communities.

4.21 Research on Civic Engagement

The Taskforce recommended:

- the establishment of a National Observatory on Active Citizenship to act as a focal point for such research, drawing together key research findings, statistical trends, new indicators and qualitative research and community-based action research – locally, nationally and internationally, including EU. It would also seek to engage in a more collaborative and mutually beneficial way with various communities.

Although this is not an action point to be progressed by the Department of Education and Science, the Department would be happy to facilitate any other Departments wishing to pursue such a facility through links to the higher education sector where relevant research is conducted.

4.22 The Taskforce recommended:

- that Ireland should participate in the 2009 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Study.

The Department of Education and Science has agreed that Ireland participate in the European Wide IEA Study. It will be undertaken by over 20 EU member states. Extensive preparatory work has been ongoing and the Study is scheduled to take place in March 2009.

4.23 **General**

In relation to other state initiatives that encourage greater citizen participation, it should be noted that the Oireachtas provided for the establishment of a Garda Reserve of part-time volunteer members in the Garda Siochana Act 2005. The Reserve was established to enhance the links between the Garda Siochana and local communities through the deployment of locally recruited volunteers who operate in support of full-time colleagues.

The Reserve is one of the most important innovations in policing in Ireland in recent years. It has strengthened the links with local communities and is a source of local support and knowledge. It brings new life to the organisation through its members. They bring a fresh and innovative approach to policing as they approach their duties with the different perspectives and skills developed in their everyday jobs and lives. The establishment of the Reserve allows committed individuals from a great diversity of professional, social, cultural and ethnic groups to take part in policing.

Recruitment commenced in August 2006 and there are currently 331 attested Reserve Gardai with a further 76 at various stages of training. Recruitment is ongoing and the Public Appointments Service (PAS) has received 2,843 new applications to join the Reserve in the first 8 months of 2008. The PAS holds interviews on a rolling basis at a range of locations around the country.

There is an on-going marketing campaign to recruit members to the Reserve. This is achieved through local media interviews, radio advertisements, cinema advertisements and public transport advertisements. Also, stands were taken at the Ploughing Championships, the Young Scientist of the Year Awards and FAS Opportunities in Croke Park. The Garda Reserve featured on the RTE Crime Call programme and a promotional DVD was commissioned and forwarded to all second level schools in the country. This DVD was transmitted on the City Channel for three months. Promotional material on the Reserve has been forwarded to each District Officer in the country to be disseminated to post offices, libraries, leisure centres, shopping centres, banks and credit unions in their District, as well as to local residents associations, neighbourhood watch groups and community alert groups.

PART II

Introduction

In line with the suggestions made by the Taskforce relating to businesses, groups and organisations, considerable progress is being made in developing corporate social responsibility and civic engagement. It is envisaged that the active citizenship initiative under the direction of the Minister and the Steering Group will seek to promote and expand these initiatives.

Part II of the Report contains a sample, contributed by the relevant organisations, of ongoing successful work in the areas of volunteering, education, sports and business.

Volunteer Centres Ireland

This brief report outlines the work of VCI and its member volunteer centres in generating active citizenship since the release of the Report of Active Citizenship in March 2007.

Introduction

Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) is the national organisation with responsibility for developing volunteering in Ireland locally and nationally. VCI is a membership organisation with membership restricted to volunteer centres. Volunteer centres are organisations that put people who want to volunteer in touch with organisations seeking volunteers. In order to become a member of VCI, volunteer centres must agree to provide the following four core activities:

- A volunteer-centred placement and support service
- Support for non-profit organisations
- Market and promote volunteering
- Ensuring good practice within volunteer centres

The role of VCI is to:

- Facilitate the national network of volunteer centres through regular national and regional meetings and newsletters
- Externally promoting the national network of placement services provided by volunteer centres;
- Developing best practice within and across volunteer centres;
- Assisting local volunteer centres to develop best practice and capacity of the volunteer-involving organisations they work with.

In addition, VCI:

- Manages the only national database of volunteering opportunities in Ireland, whereon organisations can upload volunteering opportunities and individuals can register to volunteer and view volunteering opportunities on-line
- Manages www.volunteer.ie, the national portal for volunteering in Ireland which provides access to the national database
- Makes frequent and regular contributions to policy debates, including the National Committee on Volunteering (2001), the Oireachtas sub-committee hearing (2005) and the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2006)
- Publishes a 'Step by Step Guide' to volunteering drawing on the shared knowledge and expertise of the network
- Works in close relationship with other volunteering and third-sector development agencies to collectively improve volunteering and the volunteering experience in Ireland (including Boardmatch Ireland and Business in the Community, Ireland)
- Organises Give It a Swirl Day, the national day of volunteering.

Registration and Placements

In 2007, over 4,000 individuals registered to volunteer in their local volunteer centre. 620 volunteer-involving organisations registered with volunteer centres also, bringing the total number of volunteer-involving organisations registered with VCI member volunteer centres to over 1,570. More than 1,840 volunteer placements were achieved over the year, generating approximately 143,500 volunteering hours. This equates to 73.5 full time equivalent workers. Of the more than 4,000 individuals that registered to volunteer via volunteer centres, 55% of them found out about volunteer centres via the Internet. 56% of them had never volunteered before and 71% were aged 35 years and younger.

So far, 2008 has seen an increase in the numbers of people registering to volunteer via volunteer centres. By the end of May, more than 2,750 individuals had registered to volunteer with a further 424 volunteer-involving organisations registering also. More than 1,140 volunteer placements were made, generating 83,922 volunteering hours. Similarly to 2007, 51% of those registering found out about volunteer centres via the net, 56% had never volunteered before and 67% were aged 35 or under.

Give It A Swirl Day

In September 2007, VCI, in conjunction with local volunteer centres and other partner organisations, co-ordinated Ireland's first national day of volunteering. GIASD is a unique initiative as it concentrates on hands-on involvement rather than fundraising, giving volunteers an immediate sense of achievement. In advance of the day, non-profit organisations develop volunteering projects that can take place during the course of one day. Volunteers are then recruited for these projects via a dedicated website (www.giveitaswirl.ie), the volunteer centres and partner agencies. Individuals and groups are particularly encouraged to be proactive in developing volunteering opportunities themselves, directly with volunteer-involving organisations. The objective of the day was to show that volunteering, even for a few short hours, can make a difference, be a lot of fun and highlight the avenues into volunteering also. With sponsorship from AIB and Wyeth, and a grant from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Give It A Swirl Day '07 achieved the following:

- 838 individuals participated
- 297 were youth volunteers (aged under 18)
- 68 projects took place in 60 organisations across 14 counties
- 2,583 hours of volunteering hours were generated

Give It A Swirl Day, 2008:

- More than 2,300 individuals participated (with hundreds more volunteers participating in GIASD activities organised by Hope Foundation and Irish Cancer Society)
- 130 projects took place on Give It A Swirl Day, with more events taking place in the following days
- Projects took place in every county
- The events generated more than 125 press articles promoting volunteering activities

Young People

According to the 2006 Census, the age group with the highest levels of participation in voluntary activity was 45-49 with more than one-in-four volunteers in their forties. Statistics from VCI and our member volunteer centres are in stark contrast, suggesting that volunteer centres appeal to a younger age group. Reasons include the web presence of volunteer centres and the fact that volunteer centres provide an independent 'first step' towards volunteering befitting the more discerning tendencies of younger volunteers. More importantly, however, volunteer centres also make proactive steps to involving younger volunteers including through outreaches in local schools, not only in relation to volunteering but more generally regarding active citizenship.

Social Inclusion Volunteering Supports

Volunteer Centres provide specialist support services for individuals who may have special support needs and who wish to engage in volunteering. A 'step by step' guide on involving volunteers with disabilities has been developed by the network and is available nationally through the centres.

Non-Irish Nationals

According to figures for 2008, there has been a significant increase (35%) in the number of non-Irish nationals registering to volunteer through local volunteer centres. At present, 1-in-3 individuals registering is a non-Irish national. Nigerians constitute the largest ethnic group outside Irish people, but we are delighted to confirm a significant range of ethnicities and nationalities. Volunteering is a key means by which individuals, no matter where they are from, can integrate into the society in which they presently live. The extent to which non-Irish nationals are volunteering in Ireland highlights the positive contribution they make to Irish society as well as providing real-life stories of integration and intercultural dialogue. As with youth volunteers, most of the volunteer centres actively recruit non-Irish nationals and have developed volunteering projects specifically aimed at intercultural integration.

Employer-supported Volunteering

VCI and member volunteer centres are responding to the growing interest amongst businesses to engage in volunteering. *Give It A Swirl Day* proved particularly popular amongst corporates. In addition to facilitating businesses to achieve their volunteering objectives, VCI and the network of volunteer centres are working closely with Business in the Community to ensure that the interest for employer-supported volunteering initiatives is realised in opportunities that benefit the individual or group of volunteers and the volunteer-involving organisations. To this end, VCI and Business in the Community are developing an 'off the shelf' model for voluntary engagement. To mark the UN International Day of the Volunteer in 2007, VCI, along with Business in the Community, Boardmatch Ireland and The Great Place to Work Institute undertook a snapshot survey of employer-supported volunteering in Ireland.

Garda Vetting

Many smaller volunteer-involving organisations have no access to Garda Vetting, but have adopted it as a prerequisite for volunteers. In response, the network of volunteer centres discussed how they might respond to what was becoming a significant barrier to volunteering in Ireland. South Dublin County Volunteer Centre was the first centre in Ireland to pilot a Garda Vetting Service for non-profit organisations. Following on from this very successful pilot, the network of volunteer centres have now been trained to provide Garda Vetting as a core service and a professional, comprehensive, free Garda Vetting service will be rolled out across the centres in 2008.

Quality Standards

Central to the advancement of volunteering in Ireland is the development of a transparent, accessible, high-quality, national volunteering infrastructure with local volunteer centres at the heart of it. As a volunteer development agency with membership restricted to volunteer centres, VCI is playing a key role in ensuring the development of best practice within and across the network of volunteer centres. To this end, in the summer of 2007, the board of VCI and the network of volunteer centres signed off on a 'quality standards' document that outlines the basic level of service required by VCI member volunteer centres in the four core areas of activity and for volunteer centres at initial, intermediate and advanced stages of development. A workbook to accompany the quality standards document listing examples of indicators is currently being prepared and, together, these will form the basis of evaluation for membership of VCI. In recognition of the collective knowledge and expertise within the VCI network, it is with reference to the VCI quality standards document that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will assess funding applications from volunteer centres, existing and emerging.

Volunteer Management Training

In 2007, VCI secured funds from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to train volunteer centre staff to deliver a modular volunteer management training programme to volunteer-involving organisations registered with them. The motivation was a recognised gap at the level of the network of volunteer centres that volunteer-involving organisations registered with them required support in the form of volunteer management training to develop their capacity to attract, retain and manage volunteers. At present, only two volunteer centres have the resources to provide training on a regular basis. VCI undertook training needs analysis of the training needs of volunteer involving organisations and have prepared a report based on this research. A working group has been established to develop the modules and this stage will be completed by the end of summer 2008, with a view to contracting the training of trainers in autumn 2008. By the end of the year, the roll out of volunteer management training across the network of centres will have begun.

Volunteer-involving organisations in receipt of training have proved better able to develop appropriate volunteering opportunities that benefit themselves and individual volunteers and, consequently, more successful at recruiting and retaining volunteers (a point recognised by Business in the Community in the delivery of their 'Capacity Building Workshops'). Such an increase on the present provision of volunteer management training in Ireland would significantly, and positively, impact upon the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations. Likewise, there will be a positive impact for individual volunteers within those organisations, for volunteer centres, and for the volunteering infrastructure in Ireland generally. Moreover, the project will be sustainable as it embeds the ability to provide volunteer management training in the local centres.

ICT

VCI and member centres are only too aware of the importance of new technologies in promoting volunteering and the services provided. The website, (www.volunteer.ie) is being cultivated as a gateway to volunteering and provides access to the national database of volunteering opportunities. As a criterion of membership for VCI, all member volunteer centres agree to use the same database – custom designed and provided free-of-charge by the multinational corporation Salesforce.com. (of course, a Salesforce license is one of the benefits of membership of VCI also). In addition to keeping a record of volunteers, volunteering opportunities and placements, the VCI salesforce.com database system:

- Suggests possible matches between individuals and organisations;
- Publishes up-to-the-minute reports on volunteers according to age; nationality; gender; inclination to volunteer and interests.
- Publishes up-to-the-minute reports on volunteering according to recruitment method, active vacancies, placements made and volunteering hours accumulated.

A further value to sharing the database system is that, in addition to local statistics and trends being recorded, VCI is able to issue national reports on volunteering as it occurs through Volunteer Centres. As the system is web-based, it is accessible every minute of the day and is always current. Equally, by making VCI aware of what is not happening in volunteering, the database informs the strategy of VCI and individual member volunteer centres.

Caring for Carers Ireland

Cúram don lucht Cúraim

Family Carers as Key Participants in the development of Active Citizenship.

Family Carers play a key part in active citizenship through their involvement in voluntary activities, making a positive contribution to society and local community life. Because of their caring responsibilities, they often have very large time commitments at home. Despite this they have become involved in an extensive amount of activities designed to support other Carers in their local communities.

Current and former Family Carers have formed 90 support groups around the country, mobilising the voluntary services of 4,000 people per annum. These groups meet regularly organising training courses, respite breaks, social events, information sessions, counselling workshops, fundraising events and new support services such as Carer's Clinics. Through their voluntary participation in social, civic and political life, they have increased the opportunities for other Family Carers to become actively involved in their communities by joining a Carers Support Group.

- A network of 90 Carers support groups exist throughout Ireland.
- Around 4,000 people per annum participate in Carer Support Groups.
- Approximately 6,000 Family Carers have received training organised through Support Groups.
- Up to 1,000 people per annum receive information on available services, entitlements and supports through Carers Clinics.
- Respite services are provided to over 1,000 Carers per annum through the voluntary activity of Carer's Groups.

National College of Ireland

Active Citizenship – Developments since Report of Taskforce on Active Citizenship

The following two developments are closely aligned with NCI's Strategic Plan (2007-12), which places a central emphasis on widening participation in higher education and on the creation of responsible, active citizens.

The College already has significant involvement within local communities and with the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) through a range of community-focussed courses. Both developments will, therefore, specifically and additionally contribute to NCI's decision to:

1. Encourage learning in action – a core tenet of active citizenship;
2. Develop creative methodologies and new modes of enquiry for disseminating and appropriating useful knowledge in terms of active citizenship activity;
3. Promote research and practice that demonstrates the value of active citizenship to:
 - The 'growing' of social entrepreneurs
 - Promoting voluntary effort
 - Enhancing community capacity
4. Help to embed the College as part of the Docklands community

Both will also reinforce the Taskforce's iteration of the critical role of education in fostering active citizenship.

1. Bachelor in Arts in Active Citizenship for Social Change

The Bachelor in Arts in Active Citizenship for Social Change is a level 7 degree programme which aims to develop the skills and knowledge of community leaders and organisers to support their participation in voluntary and community activities. The programme is a joint initiative between National College of Ireland and the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. Development work on the programme began in January 2007 and was guided by a board of studies comprising the following representatives:

- Mr. Gerry Kelly (Chair) – Director of Social Regeneration, Dublin Docklands Development Authority
- Ms. Mary Davis – Chair of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship
- Dr. Maureen Gaffney – Chair of the National Economic and Social Forum
- Ms. Catherine Eddery – Department of the Taoiseach
- Mr. Cormac Russell – Managing Director, Nurture Development
- Mr. Matt Bolton – Manager of Social Regeneration, Dublin Docklands Development Authority
- Ms. Michele Ryan – Dean of School of Community Studies, National College of Ireland
- Dr. Julie Byrne – Lecturer, National College of Ireland

The programme was reviewed by an external panel of experts – Dr. Tony Crooks (Pobal) and Dr. Brid Quinn (University of Limerick) – prior to being submitted to HETAC for formal validation on 25th January 2008.

On 25th September 2008 the programme was successfully defended to a HETAC panel of experts comprising:

- Dr. Perry Share – Head of Department of Humanities, Institute of Technology Sligo (Chair)
- Professor John Annette – Professor of Citizenship & Lifelong Learning, Pro Vice Master for Lifelong Learning & Engagement, Birbeck College, University of London
- Mr. Aidan Clifford, Director, Curriculum Development Unit, City of Dublin VEC
- Professor Elizabeth Meehan, Professor Emeritus of Politics, Queen’s University Belfast
- Mr. Joe Cox - HETAC

2. Combat Poverty Agency Research Award

“Engaging People in Active Citizenship – Testing the key conclusions of the ETGACE (Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe) Research Project within an Irish Context”

This study, a specialist research study funded by the Combat Poverty Agency, aims to identify and clarify the role of active citizenship in addressing poverty and related concerns within Dublin Docklands. In particular, it seeks to:

- Investigate how local people are learning to be active citizens, and the kinds of supports that exist to assist them in this; specifically, the role of local community and voluntary organisations as educational instruments for active citizenship (biographical research);
- Provide evidence of the manner in which local people are engaging in sustained forms of popular participation as active citizens and the ways in which their activation is impacting on quality of life in the Docklands area (survey: postal questionnaire);
- Identify what new approaches to educational intervention for active citizenship are currently being developed as part of the Docklands regeneration programme and recommend which approaches should be fostered as key constituents of community sustainability going forward (focus groups);
- Highlight lessons that may be usefully applied in other similar environments in Ireland and internationally.

Confirmation of the award was received in May 2008. The Study’s final written report is due in March 2009.

National University of Ireland, Galway

Supporting Active Citizenship within Higher Education in Ireland

A Profile of 'Campus Engage'

A new national Irish network, entitled 'Campus Engage' was established in 2008, which will nurture and allow civic engagement activities to grow across the higher education sector in Ireland. This network emerges from a collaborative project entitled 'Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship' which has been funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) SIF 1 with funds matched by the partner institutions. The National University of Ireland, Galway is leading the initiative in partnership with the National University of Ireland Maynooth, Dublin City University, University College Dublin and University of Limerick. The principal objective of the network is to increase the number of formal and informal opportunities students have to engage with community and civic activities while attending higher education. To this end, the network will share information and experience on how to embed civic engagement activities in institutions across the island, while also enabling institutions of higher education to respond to the needs of local, national and international communities, which underpins the recommendations put forward by the Taskforce on Active Citizenship in 2007.

The role that institutions of higher education can play in civic engagement has been gaining momentum globally whereby many institutions are mainstreaming activities through service learning, engaged research and volunteering, with the USA taking a current lead. While civic engagement within higher education is at infancy stages within the context of Ireland, the evolution of Campus Engage has been inspired by a number of international networks that support institutions of higher education to embed activities. These include Campus Compact in the USA, formed in 1985 through the dedication of just four higher education leaders, with membership now in excess of 1,100 colleges and universities, and the 'Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance' (AUCEA) led by the University of Western Sydney since 2004 and supported by over twenty-five institutional members.

The five institutions collaborating through 'Campus Engage' are at different stages in terms of embedding civic engagement strategies. In 2001, the first formal and strategic civic engagement expression came in the form of the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) at NUI Galway to realise a civic vision as part of its core activities. Since that time, over a thousand students annually connect with communities through community based learning academic opportunities and a student volunteering programme called 'ALIVE'. UCD formed the 'Centre for Service Learning, Civic Engagement and Volunteering' in 2007 which offers a community based learning module and is harnessing existing activities and facilitating future practice. DCU have developed approaches through their institutional 'Civic Engagement Strategy' and guided by a theme leader in 'Internationalisation, Interculturalism and Social Development'. In addition, DCU introduced in 2003 a standalone module entitled the 'Uaneen' Module which awards credit to students for extracurricular work in communities on and off campus. NUI Maynooth and UL are at stages of development and progressing work associated with civic engagement.

'Campus Engage' will provide training materials and organise events including a major international conference on 5th and 6th June 2009 at Croke Park, Dublin entitled 'Higher Education and Civic Engagement Partnerships: Create, Challenge, Change' and welcomes community organisations, students, administrators and academics from Ireland and beyond. It will provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the potential for positive change through research, service learning/community based learning, civic education and volunteering looking at international models from South America, Australia, UK and Ireland. In addition, a

national review of volunteering, service learning and community research will be commissioned, leading to recommendations for long term, sustainable growth and development. In 2009-2010 a visiting distinguished US scholar will work with academic staff and students in Ireland to support the institutionalisation of civic engagement within higher education and ensure that a research dimension will support civic engagement within Ireland. It is anticipated that the scale of student participation and volunteering opportunities will increase, through the development of appropriate models based on experience and evaluation. Additional information on the network can be accessed at www.campusengage.ie or info@campusengage.ie

The Dublin Institute of Technology

The Dublin Institute of Technology strives to be strongly rooted within the local community where it is located. With a highly developed Community Links programme, and a strong ethos of volunteering among its staff and students, the Institute has developed several innovative programmes to support and develop volunteering and active citizenship within the campus community.

- 23% of the 20,000 students in DIT are involved in volunteering activities with the Institute.
- The Faculty of Business has developed an innovative Certificate in Volunteering to support local activists in the voluntary sector - the first graduates received their certificates in April 2008.
- The DIT Governing Body recently approved a Chairpersons Medal for Civic Engagement to recognise final year students who had made a significant contribution to society outside their academic studies during their time in college.
- DIT has developed an innovative Community Based Learning Programme, where students receive credit for working on projects based in the local community. For example, the CARS project (College Awareness of Road Safety) involves students working with the Garda Síochána to promote the message of road safety to their peers.
- In the past year, DIT students have also been involved in voluntary projects in Malawi, Belarus and the Philippines.
- Many of the DIT Community Links initiatives - such as the supervised study programme, community arts programme and educational awareness programme - involve student volunteers supporting local children and their parents.

Other initiatives include a Volunteering Fair, a YouTube video to encourage students to participate in volunteering activities <http://ie.youtube.com/watch?v=-066G-uLFJA>, Social Action Projects run by the chaplaincy, and the recent appointment in the Societies Office of a staff member responsible for the development of volunteering. There is a strong belief in DIT that students learn valuable practical skills through their volunteering activities, and also that the Institute has a role in supporting the development of the local communities where it is based.

Limerick Institute of Technology

GIVE - Guided Initiative in Voluntary Engagement

The mission statement of Limerick Institute of Technology is to prepare learners for fulfilling and challenging futures, fostering the professional, intellectual, social, cultural and personal development of the individual. The hallmark of our educational philosophy is active learning through a fusion of theory and practice.

Limerick Institute of Technology is an important player in its region and community and its educational philosophy is being further developed to encourage students to become active citizens within the college and the local community.

In fostering this ethos, the GIVE (Guided Initiative in Voluntary Engagement) project was established by the Limerick Institute of Technology Access Service in association with the President's Office in the academic year 2007/2008.

The GIVE project encourages students to engage in voluntary activities under the guidance of the Access Service. In return, the Access Service trains the volunteers and assists them in developing their skills in leadership and communication. The LIT GIVE project benefits both the community and the volunteers by combining a service experience with a learning and development experience. GIVE volunteers bring their enthusiasm, skills and abilities to their roles. A certain level of commitment is requested from GIVE volunteers and, in appreciation of this commitment, GIVE volunteers receive a Commendation from the President of Limerick Institute of Technology, Dr. Maria Hinfelaar.

The President's Commendation is a tiered, prestigious commendation scheme that bestows recognition on GIVE volunteers on completion of a level of commitment to the project. The rationale behind the tiered framework is to allow for volunteers to continue their involvement from year to year with the increased benefit of escalating the status and level of their commendation. A Bronze Commendation is awarded in recognition of 20 hours voluntary engagement, Silver Commendation in recognition of 40 hours engagement and a Gold Commendation in recognition of 60 hours voluntary engagement. On 13th May, 2008, LIT hosted the first President's Commendation Ceremony in association with the local community. Guest Speaker Mr. Sean Kelly, former Chairperson of the Irish Institute of Sport and member of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, noted in his speech:

"In terms of the work you are doing here, particularly with young people in Limerick, it is important not to underestimate the significant impact you are making to lives. You are inspiring children to believe in themselves and to discover that sense of belonging and of responsibility to their fellow citizens. This is the hugely powerful leadership quality you have developed through your active participation in the 'GIVE' project and will determine future lives."

Further praise was bestowed upon the volunteers by Mayor of Limerick his worship Ger Fahy, saying:

"The GIVE initiative at Limerick Institute of Technology is a striking example of a very important sector of volunteerism. Volunteering is not just about adults or businesses getting involved with communities but more importantly about fostering a civic spirit among young people. We must recognise the outstanding example set by LIT students in their voluntary contribution to the local community and never underestimate that they have willingly volunteered their talents for the betterment of the Northside community. These are exciting times regarding Limerick's transformation as a city and positive civic attitudes within city and educational communities make Limerick's future all the brighter."

Throughout the academic year GIVE volunteers participated in a wide variety of activities ranging from sporting initiatives to educational initiatives. The community response on the contribution from GIVE volunteers is echoed in the words of Eddie O'Shaughnessy, Youth Worker at St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre:

"Working with 'GIVE' volunteers through the Access Service at LIT is fast becoming a wonderful asset to St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre and is contributing in a very meaningful way by creating positive links between the local community, the students and the Institute of Technology. While working with 'GIVE' student volunteers in the 'GO4IT' initiative, a third level access program for sixth class students, it became evident that their enthusiasm was not only beneficial to us, but was also creating positive role models for sixth class students. This joint initiative between the Family Resource Center and Limerick Institute of Technology has served to strengthen links for all concerned, especially the local community, and has given the word 'volunteer' new meaning and a place in people's lives."

Following this successful pilot year it is hoped that GIVE will continue to contribute to recommendations outlined by the Taskforce and to LIT's own educational philosophy.

University College Dublin

Centre for Service Learning, Community Engagement & Volunteering (CSLCEV)

Introduction

The UCD Centre for Service Learning, Community Engagement & Volunteering (CSLCEV) was established in October 2007 to promote and encourage civic engagement. The Centre is committed to providing students of University College Dublin with a rounded social education and a strong sense of citizenship, while concentrating on its three main activities:

- To promote and encourage volunteering
- To work with UCD faculty and staff to develop and promote academic modules that incorporate elements of community engagement
- To foster links with the "not-for-profit" sector, especially in the local community.

Progress to date

Work continues to promote and encourage civic engagement in UCD, and to foster and build on existing links to local community organisations in the following ways:

- UCD is a founding member of Campus Engage, a national network established to promote civic engagement in higher education in Ireland. CSLCEV represents UCD in this network.
- An award, entitled, Recognition of Voluntary Engagement (ROVE), sponsored by the UCD Alumni Fund, was launched for students. ROVE acknowledges and promotes volunteering through recognition of the voluntary contribution of UCD students to community life, both on and off campus.
- CSLCEV has offered two of a series of workshops to UCD faculty and staff with the intention of building capacity to design and implement academic modules that contain a significant element of service or community-based learning. The first workshop, entitled "Community Engagement in an Academic Context" was offered in May 2008, and focused on identifying the challenges to, and solutions offered to facilitate, the incorporation of elements of community engagement into academic modules in UCD. The second workshop, entitled "Curriculum Design for Service Learning" was offered on 1st December 2008, and focused on promoting awareness of the opportunities for embedding a civic engagement dimension within the curriculum and in providing a practical exercise in curriculum planning. Both workshops generated significant interest and were well attended.
- A UCD Connect network group (CBL Group) was established to facilitate networking, information sharing and communication relating to civic engagement among UCD faculty and staff across campus.

- UCD is represented on the Board of Directors of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Volunteer Centre by CSLCEV. This fosters links to local community organisations and impacts on the development of volunteering opportunities for students.
- A team of 26 volunteers, drawn from UCD staff and students, worked with the local community in Rosemount Court Flats, Dundrum to paint the railings and stairwells of the flats for "Give it a Swirl Day" on 26th September 2008. This project has recently been awarded first prize in the Environmental Section of the 2008 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Community Awards.

Future Plans

- Offer, to UCD students, a series of seminar's and briefing sessions with an emphasis on volunteering and related topics.
- Contribution, through the Campus Engage network, to the development of policy on civic engagement in the Irish higher education sector.
- Continued identification and development of links and networking with local community organisations.

Gaelic Athletic Association

The GAA has begun many initiatives encouraging integration at different levels. Firstly, within the GAA family of Ladies football - Camogie, rounders and handball and the GAA itself - it has embarked on projects at all levels from grassroots level to strengthen the family and community ethos of the Association.

Also, it has embarked on a number of initiatives to reach out to and encourage immigrants to Ireland to make them feel welcome and accommodated in GAA clubs. Among the initiatives are:

- The GAA has established a Task Force to help formulate its Inclusion plan of action. This work group involves the entire family of Gaelic Games – Camogie, Ladies Football, Handball, Rounders, Football and Hurling. Consultants assisting the Task Force interviewed various NGO's and Government Departments in the data-gathering phase of the project and members of the Task Force also met with Minister for Integration, Mr. Conor Lenihan TD and his officials.
- The GAA is also setting up committees to liaise with the immigrant support groups in the country and Mr. Conor Lenihan, Minister for Integration launched this recently.
- As part of the consultation phase of the development of this plan, representatives of minority, ethnic and religious groups were invited to Croke Park for the Inter-Provincial Finals and also to discuss their views on the GAA and how we might encourage their participation.
- Each year, the GAA Invites children and their mentors from immigrant communities to come free of charge to the Provincial finals and play an exhibition game at half time of the big games. These finals attract attendances between 30,000 and 80,000 people and this is a great occasion for the young boys and girls and their families. Many would be experiencing a live GAA game for the first time.
- GAA is now encouraging its 2,600 clubs to hold 'open nights' where the new immigrants to Ireland will be encouraged to come to the clubs and learn and experience the central role the GAA club plays in every community.
- These open nights/days will be replicated in schools to encourage the children to make the transition from playing GAA in school to establishing and playing with a local club. All the coaches and teachers in the schools present the games to all children regardless of background.

The Inclusion plan will then be incorporated into the GAA's National Strategic Plan which Ard-Stiurthoir, Paraic Duffy, is preparing for the Association. It will be published in late 2008.

A Profile of Citizenship Activities of Business in the Community Ireland Members

Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) is recognised as the lead organisation on corporate responsibility in Ireland, encouraging and supporting its members to be open about, and accountable for, their practices and processes.

BITCI also promote and support community engagement by the business sector. In their publication, 'Inspiring Excellence-Best Practice in Corporate Responsibility in Ireland 2007', BITCI noted a steady rise in the willingness of leading businesses to convey how they are managing and improving their business performance.

Examples of responsible business practice include advancement in customer service and communications, product innovation and development; employee leadership, diversity management, staff engagement; sustainable building, energy and waste management and reduction; corporate giving, employer supported volunteering and community involvement. The following are samples of case-studies outlining business/community activities from its 2008 Report.



[AIB – Involvement with local communities](#)

The AIB Staff partnership fund in the Republic of Ireland is designed to recognise the involvement of AIB staff members within their own communities. The fund is in place to reward the commitment of staff members - who either raise funds for local groups or volunteer time and expertise free of charge - by providing much needed funds to the group in question. Staff members may apply for funds up to €500 for one person or €5,000 for a group application.

Some of the projects which staff supported during 2007 were Cavan Visual Artists Network, the Children's Medical and Research Foundation, Dublin Simon Community, and Carmelite Lourdes Fund, among others.

[AIB – Working for schoolchildren](#)

Within AIB's Better Ireland Programme, the company partners with Barnardos, ISPCC and Focus Ireland to implement the bank's 'Schoolmate' project. The Schoolmate project aims to improve the lives of Irish children considered to be most at risk of missing school through (a) hunger or lack of nutrition, (b) being homeless, and (c) the effects of drug or alcohol abuse.



[AOL Global Operations – Engaging with the Community through employee volunteering](#)

AOL wished to contribute to the West Dublin area where it is based and where many of its staff live. AOL actively encourages its employees to make use of AOL's company-wide volunteering policy, where employees take time off work to get involved in volunteering activities. AOL organised a workshop for the voluntary organisations and four charities were identified with opportunities ranging from once-off projects to short and medium term projects. Fifty staff volunteered and each charity was assigned a Project Leader. The charities chosen were Fettercairn Youth Horse Project, Killinarden Resource Centre, Tallaght Hospital and Fighting Blindness.



**Bank of
Ireland**

[Bank of Ireland – Voluntary community support initiative](#)

The Bank of Ireland Group has a strong and committed tradition of contributing to the communities in which they make their living. "Give Together" is a community support initiative based on the strong ethos of volunteering in the workforce and the fact that nowadays the scarcest and most valuable resource is time. This initiative facilitates employees who wish to volunteer their time and support causes that are important to them. As part of it, Bank of Ireland provides one day's leave to every employee each year to volunteer their time to a cause of their choice. They have also put in place an annual fund which allows the Bank to contribute to employee fundraising achievements and to support these endeavours. This new direction in Corporate Giving in the Group, gives employees the freedom to choose which charitable causes or community organisations receive support, rather than these decisions being made centrally, as in the past.

[Bank of Ireland – Involvement in local Community issues – being a good neighbour](#)

Bank of Ireland IT Solutions and Operations & Payments, based in Cabinteely, has a comprehensive community involvement strategy in place. There are five aspects of this programme which involve volunteering:

- Supporting employees engaged in various community organisations.
- A junior schools' programme involving 10 local national schools. To-date, over 2,000 students have been covered.
- A Schools' Business Partnership with St. Thomas's School, Bray and Cabinteely Community School.
- Two challenge days completed annually in company time. 13 challenges have been completed to date.
- Charity of Choice - All staff put their spare cents in designated "Angel Bowls" and when full the coins are counted and staff then votes on the charity who receives the monies. So far, donations have been made to Cystic Fibrosis, NCBI and the Irish Kidney Association

Bank of Ireland – Educating for the future

As Bank of Ireland's Millennium Scholars Trust (MST) enters its eighth year, it has awarded over 400 scholarships and allocated over €6.6 million to date. The self-liquidating trust of €12.7m will continue to award scholarships up to 2009 and will support students up to 2013. The Trust assists many students facing economic, social and other barriers to achieving their education potential. To help these scholarship winners make a successful transition into third-level education, the Trust has created a mentoring programme whereby Bank of Ireland staff, who receive special training for the purpose, support the students in practical ways ranging from advice to help on the academic front. Almost 200 Bank of Ireland employees have volunteered their time in this regard.



BT – Telephony support networks for community benefit

BT shows communities that through enhanced communication, no person needs to feel isolated or alone due to illness, long-term disability, age or geography. Through its collaboration with Community Network Ireland, community and support groups have been introduced to a unique telephony service which allows people to be part of a support network regardless of their mobility or geographic location. Post Polio Support Group and Saoirse are two such groups that are already seeing the direct benefit of the service. Utilising its expertise and knowledge in telephony and IT services to benefit communities and to promote strong social inclusion, is core to BT's corporate social responsibility programme, which includes fostering community involvement. BT is providing the necessary financial, advisory and technical support to enable Community Network to operate. BT can offer its unique professional expertise to help build these communities through better communications.



C & C Group plc – Providing educational opportunities with community partnerships

Since 2004, C&C has focused some of their efforts on specially chosen partnerships. An organisation called The Life Centre was selected. The Centre, in Pearse Square, Dublin, caters for young people aged between 12 and 16 for whom mainstream education has not worked. Through the Centre they are provided with an invaluable opportunity to gain life skills and complete their Junior Certificate.



[Coca-Cola – Promoting a healthy lifestyle](#)

Coca-Cola aims to encourage as many people as possible to lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle through their participation in sporting activities. They have a long-standing partnership with the GAA through their sponsorship of Féile Na nGael and Féile Peil Na nÓg. Additionally, Coca-Cola, in association with the IRFU, introduced Tag Rugby to over 300 primary schools and 45,000 participants.

[Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland – Employer supported volunteering programme](#)

Coca-Cola Bottlers Ireland (CCBI) set up a formal employer-supported volunteering programme, called the Coca-Cola Ireland Community Programme, which is open to all employees. This programme allows Coca-Cola Ireland employees to work with a locally based charity. Each employee can avail of one day per quarter to volunteer. In addition, the company will offer financial support to a selected charity. In 2008, staff selected the Irish Kidney Association as their charity of choice and during the year they participated in fundraising events such as the Dublin City mini-marathon. Also in 2008, CCBI became the title sponsor of the Cinemagic Film and Television Festival for young people in Dublin. This festival offers an array of workshops, screenings and master classes to young people, aged between 4 and 18, in communities all around Dublin. Each year, CCBI supports hundreds of local initiatives in communities all around the country. For example, during the first half of 2008, CCBI supplied over 40,000 bottles of product to community and sporting groups free of charge.



[Coillte – Schools' Business Partnerships for career development](#)

Coillte operates two Schools' Business Partnerships, one with Stranorlar Secondary School in County Donegal and one with St. Killian's Community School in Bray, Co. Wicklow. These programmes involve working with pupils on career development topics and providing pupils with an insight into the workplace. Coillte is also an active participant in the 'Managing Excellence for School Principals' programme which involves business leaders sharing their expertise and strategy with educational leaders through a series of workshops over the course of the school year. Coillte's Training Manager delivered Time Management workshops to School Principals at centres in Cork, Dublin, Athlone, Galway and Limerick. In addition, Coillte's Group Head of Human Resources also provided sessions for School Principals on Performance Management.



[CRH – An innovative approach to supporting homeless people](#)

CRH businesses in Ireland joined together in an initiative in mid-2007 to support the Simon Communities of Ireland, a charity organisation dedicated to helping homeless people. This initiative involved the entire CRH workforce by focusing on their safety performance. A number of launch events were held around the country, highlighting how each business unit could contribute to this worthy cause by improving their accident frequency and severity rates. Based on initial projections, this innovative approach yielded almost €800,000 for the Simon Communities of Ireland by mid-2008. The successful initiative will be extended for another year.



[Danone – Supporting fundraising efforts for children in disadvantaged areas](#)

The Danone 'Big Toddle for Barnardos' occurs during the months of May and June, when hundreds of crèches, playgroups and families organise their own half mile toddles to raise funds for other children more vulnerable than themselves. With costs paid by Danone, all funding raised goes directly to Barnardos Best Start services, which aim to provide healthy development and support to children aged 0-4 in some of the country's most disadvantaged areas. Now in its fifth year, the event is going from strength to strength. Almost 50,000 toddlers from 2,000 groups have raised €1.2 million for work with vulnerable children all over Ireland. The event provides an opportunity for Danone staff, suppliers and customers to get involved in what is now the biggest fundraising event for Barnardos and goes to the heart of Danone's ethos of doing business with a socially ethical mindset.



[Dell – Facilitating volunteer activity and charitable fundraising](#)

Each year, Dell designates September as Global Community Involvement Month (GCIM). In Ireland, employees dedicate time and resources to a range of activities and events to support the local community. Each year, the company nominates a charity to support and all funds raised over the duration of the month go to that charity. During the 2007 Global

Community Involvement Month, Dell supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Team projects were organised in which employees worked together on a community project. Release time or time off from work was given to facilitate volunteer activities. €47,000 was raised for Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Dell – Skills transfer and support to community organisations

The Dell Foundation focuses engagements in two thematic areas: “Community Foundations” focuses on organisations that help meet basic needs and protect the well being of people in those communities; “Community Growth” focuses on activities and organisations that provide digital literacy skills to those in Dell communities, especially young people. The Dell Foundation ‘Equipping Youth Grants’ offers direct financial assistance to non-profit organisations and programmes to equip young people with access to technology and inspire them to learn and excel in a digitally driven economy.

Since June 2006, the Dell Foundation has provided a total of €123,000 to six projects in the Dublin and Limerick areas. The recipients are: The Children’s Sunshine Home, Dublin; Moyross Development Company, Limerick; Coláiste Chiaráin, Limerick; Watchcross Library, Moyross, Limerick; St. Vincent De Paul, Limerick and Presentation School, St. Georges Hill, Dublin 7. Dell estimate that almost 1,000 lives have been enhanced as a result of the funding provided to the six recipient projects to date.

Dell – Creating a blueprint for the school of the future

In 2001, Dell developed a relationship with Coláiste Chiaráin, Limerick, a local designated disadvantaged school, to design and implement a fully integrated wireless solution in the school. The goal was to complement traditional teaching methods and to create a blueprint of the school of the future by significantly enhancing the learning experience of students in the classroom environment and at home. Coláiste Chiaráin received €28,000 from the Dell Foundation in 2007, to support first-year students to purchase Dell notebook computers and the company provided technical and software support and training for their parents and extended families. Since 2001, Dell has equipped the school with extensive wireless capability and has donated over 130 computers, in addition to providing server and PDA technology to the students. To complement the technology donation, a special Dell discounted purchasing scheme was established for the school and for parents of incoming pupils.

Dell has produced a model of excellence, in partnership with the school that can be emulated by other schools. Most of the 884 students and all of the teachers have committed to the programme. There has to be a goal to apply technology to all aspects of the learning process and to integrate it fully in the curriculum.



Deloitte – Working with Community partners

Deloitte recently launched a new community programme that focused on two key areas: homelessness and disability. The two community partners selected were Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) and Richmond Cheshire Home in Monkstown. 150 employees took part in two “team challenge” events in September. The projects involved painting and re-decorating the adult education centre run by MQI in Chapelizod and 20 bedrooms of residents at Richmond Cheshire Homes. Eighteen employees also took residents out on a day trip. Both projects were a great success.

DIAGEO

IRELAND

Diageo – Supporting employee volunteering and fundraising

One of Diageo's 2008 highlights was the annual Guinness Triathlon, which celebrated its eleventh year. Staff who participated in the Triathlon raised €45,000, which was presented to Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children. Over the past ten years, the Guinness Triathlon has raised over €200,000 for the hospital. On St. Patrick's Day, Diageo hosted a day of events for 200 elderly people from Friends of the Elderly in the Guinness Storehouse. This event gave many of the elderly neighbours in Dublin 8 the opportunity to socialise together and to participate in the St. Patrick's Day festivities. Many staff volunteered to participate in the event, which proved a great success.

Diageo – Co-operating with other stakeholders for the benefit of local communities

Diageo Ireland has a long history of involvement with the community of the Liberties, where the St. James's Gate Brewery is located. The Liberties is also the location of The Digital Hub, which has a strong educational and community remit to ensure that the local community benefits from the project. Diageo Ireland formed a partnership with The Digital Hub, the Diageo Liberties Learning Initiative (DLLI). Since 2001, Diageo Ireland has contributed nearly €3m to DLLI, which has delivered over 20 programmes involving more than 6,000 participants

Diageo –Working in support of Youth education

Mentoring programmes were of significant importance within Diageo's CSR activities during 2008. As part of an ongoing involvement in the local community, many employees from the St James's Gate Brewery participated in the mentoring programme, with schools such as St. James's CBS and Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount. The mentoring programme benefits students in the development of self-confidence and social skills. Through this programme, students are encouraged to explore their career choices and mentors provide students with opportunities to further develop their potential and their talents.



EAGLE STAR

Eagle Star – Corporate citizenship programme supporting charities

Eagle Star's Corporate Citizenship programme was officially launched on 26th September 2007. This programme encompasses charitable contributions, community engagement and environmental responsibility. The Irish Hospice Foundation was chosen by the staff of Eagle Star to be the first major recipient of their Corporate Citizenship Fund for a twelve-month period. This Fund comprises all monies generated by staff fundraising activities together with the voluntary monthly charity salary deduction. Eagle Star will match any monies raised by its staff.



[Eircom – Making a difference through sports](#)

eircom has supported Special Olympics Ireland for 22 years and also supports 10 other charities. In 2007 they launched a new campaign to support athletes competing in the Special Olympics World Games in Shanghai. Employees engaged in collective fundraising and many of them volunteered to go to the World Games in China. eircom's HR department devised a special leave policy to facilitate those who wished to travel.

[Eircom – Supporting community fundraising](#)

The People in Need Trust (PIN) has been raising funds from local communities through telethons on RTE since 1988. eircom has supported all nine telethons. Up to 2007, telethons had raised some €35m. The target for telethon 2007 was €7m. All monies raised from communities goes back to those communities in the form of grants to a wide range of organisations. The fundraising is led through offices nationwide that organise local communities in advance and on the night of the telethon. These efforts are showcased on the RTE broadcast which moves between the studio in Montrose and the eircom financial centre where staff volunteer to take pledges on free phone lines. There is also an online auction, and celebrities get involved. eircom provided communications facilities to offices nationwide, as well as the telethon website, mobiles (from Meteor), a call-centre on telethon night, staffed by 140 staff members, a series of free phone numbers for donations, an auction and a corporate donation of €100,000.



[Elan - Schools' Business Partnership programme](#)

Elan has participated in the Schools' Business Partnership programme. Employees working at Elan Drug Technologies, Athlone embarked on an initiative which aims to provide a first hand insight to the world of work to senior students from St Aloysius as part of the *Skills @ Work Programme*. Employees of Elan provided talks on 'A Day in the Life of ...' a company overview, CV workshops and interview skills as well as mock interviews to assist them in their quest for career paths. The students visited the Elan site and witnessed first hand the many different career opportunities the pharmaceutical industry can offer.



[Ericsson – Promoting employee-driven fundraising](#)

In 2007 Ericsson Ireland wanted to increase employee engagement through employee-driven fundraising for a nominated charity for 2008. Ericsson Ireland chose to aid the Irish Hospice Foundation for the Charity 2008 programme. The choice of charity came from employees who wanted to sponsor a room in a hospice under construction in Athlone. The Irish Hospice Foundation would act as the umbrella organisation through which

employees could raise funds for two programmes, the Children's Home Hospice Care Programme in Dublin and the South Westmeath Hospice Foundation. 124 employees participated in the Great Ireland Run in April 2008, raising €33,000.

A target of €50,000 will fund the establishment of one of the four rooms under construction in the new South Westmeath Hospice and will also fund 50% of the salary of a newly appointed outreach nurse to care for children with life limiting conditions in the Dublin area.



ESB – Working in partnership with Charities

ESB Electric AID Ireland was set up in 2005 to provide financial support for charities in Ireland working in the area of homelessness and suicide prevention. In 2008, ESB confirmed their focus on these two specific areas for another three years. By August 2008, 190 suicide projects had been supported, along with 106 projects in the homelessness area. The support has been provided to national organisations, research bodies, regional charities, right down to local community and parish-based initiatives. This social responsibility initiative is run in partnership with Electric Aid, ESB staff's social justice fund, which has been supporting development projects in Ireland and across the world since 1987. By 2008, 2,700 ESB people were contributing members of Electric Aid. This partnership means that Electric Aid (supported by matching ESB funding) now focuses primarily on long-term and sustainable development projects in the Developing World. Meanwhile, ESB Electric AID Ireland devotes specific funding (€1 million per year) to the two targeted areas in Ireland – suicide and homelessness.

ESB – Sponsoring Positive Ageing activities

ESB Customer Supply sponsor Positive Ageing Week which had a number of objectives, including:

- Increasing awareness of ageing matters in Ireland
- Highlighting the work of Age Action
- Promoting cooperation and support between other community, voluntary and private sector groups



Glanbia – making a difference at Barretstown

In 2008, Glanbia and its consumer foods business under the "Avonmore" brand have selected Barretstown, the therapeutic recreation camp for children with cancer and other serious illnesses, as their designated Irish charity of choice, for a three-year period. The combined Avonmore/Glanbia team is committed to raising financial support in the region of €2m for Barretstown.



GlaxoSmithKline – Encouraging and supporting employee fundraising

The staff of GSK selected 2 charities in 2008 – Fr. Peter McVerry Trust and Prader-Willi. The main focus is fundraising. Employees have also volunteered with Barretstown contributing a maximum of 20 days in the year (3 or 4 people at 5 days each). GlaxoSmithKline matches the time that employees contribute.



Hibernian – Taking support for volunteering programme to a new level

The Hibernian Volunteer Programme actively encourages its employees to engage in volunteering by helping to give something back. Employees are permitted to take time off work to pursue involvement in a volunteer project or initiative. In April 2008, a plan was unveiled that took the Volunteer Programme to a new and exciting level. Having already established connections with one of Mongolia's State Orphanages and the Christina Noble Foundation, Hibernian decided that they would like to play a part in helping Mongolia's orphans. Staff around the country were invited to make donations of clothes and toys for this appeal. A 20ft container filled with clothes, toys and hardware was dispatched to Outer Mongolia for distribution amongst the State Orphanages and the Christina Noble Foundation.

Hibernian – Building good community relations

Hibernian believes that "building good community relations is an important part of doing business". Hibernian staff wanted the opportunity to use their skills in practical ways and their volunteer programme chose projects targeting issues of youth disadvantage, new communities, isolation of older persons and the homeless. Fully backed by Hibernian, through the availability of time and financial resources, employees use their skills to help local children with homework, volunteer for an activity group for older people or share their IT and HR skills with those looking for employment.



IBM – Supporting employees contributing to community life

IBM's On-demand Community programme allows employees to work, individually or in a group, for their chosen charity and earn rewards such as PC's or printers for that charity, based on accumulated volunteer hours. In addition, online resources are available to support employees in their volunteering role e.g. presentations suitable for schools, guidance on how to be a board member of a school or of a not-for-profit organisation.

IBM – Improving student achievement and narrowing the digital divide

IBM's top social priority is education. By providing the latest technology the company aims to improve student achievement and narrow the digital divide, particularly amongst the disadvantaged. IBM's *Kid Smart Early Learning Programme* is run in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science's National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). By the end of 2007, IBM will have donated over 550 Kid Smart Early Learning Centres to primary schools in disadvantaged areas in the Republic of Ireland. These donations include IBM hardware, educational software (Riverdeep), a global support website, www.kidsmartearlylearning.org, NCTE training and support, and the opportunity to participate in the collaborative Learning Village programme.



Intel – Supporting employees volunteering for local projects

Through the Intel Involved programme, the company works closely with schools, neighbours and community leaders. 38% of employees volunteered for projects locally. Employees are encouraged to volunteer time through the programme, called 'Volunteer Matching Grants'. The programme donated over €20,000 to their local schools. During 2008, Intel is celebrating its 40th anniversary by extending the matching grants programme to four strategic non-profit organisations

Intel – Addressing community challenges through technology

Intel is interested in technology applications that address community challenges. The Leixlip Library Project is a three-year, €5 million project, incorporating a new technology design with a wireless network and bespoke technology-oriented workstations. The library also boasts a technology solutions' suite to attract young people to learning. Intel and the library staff collaborated to produce a library Music Outreach Programme. The technology innovations that work in the library have set the design standard for four additional new libraries under construction in the region. The Home Computing Initiative provides information and low-cost packages to enable individuals to purchase a computer package to suit their needs. Each package will offer hardware, software, virus protection and warranty support. Low-cost finance options and group purchase schemes are available e.g. the Student Purchase Programme. Intel also provided expertise to Ryevale nursing home to implement a new ICT infrastructure to enable innovative technology solutions within the nursing home.

Intel – Providing opportunities for skills transfer for young people

The Intel Computer Clubhouse is an after school programme providing young people, aged 10-18, with access to high tech equipment, professional software and adult mentors. The aim is to help them develop the self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning skills needed to create opportunities. Youth who visit the Computer Clubhouse learn in a hands-on, fun environment. They create digital artwork, produce their own music CDs, they film, write and edit their own short movies and design web sites. The Intel Computer Clubhouse has over 100 children from the Liberties area of Dublin attending the workshop on a weekly basis.



Irish Life & Permanent – Organising staff charity fundraising

Irish Life & Permanent's two main businesses, Irish Life and permanent tsb both have successful staff charity organisations managed and run by members of staff. The charities benefiting from support each year are selected by way of a staff vote. Charities selected by Irish Life included the Cystic Fibrosis Association and Aids Partnership for Africa. Each charity received €80,000. Permanent tsb staff chose St Francis Hospice, Dublin and Rosbrien Suicide Awareness Group. Nearly €72,700 was donated to each charity.

Irish Life & Permanent – Working with Age Action Ireland to develop services for the elderly

Irish Life has selected Age Action Ireland as its partner to develop care and repair services for older people in Ireland. There will be two services - a home visiting service and a small, home repairs service. Irish Life is providing funding of €250,000 a year for three years to Age Action to set up the new services. The intention is to pilot them initially in Dublin (Docklands) and Galway city and, if successful, to extend them across the country over the next three years

Permanent tsb – Investing in Youth through the Foróige Youth Citizenship programme

In January 2007, permanent tsb launched a partnership with Foróige, the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship programme, with a commitment to invest €2 million over three years in cash, marketing support and volunteering. The programme consists of projects that young people around Ireland undertake to improve their local communities. Many more young people will be involved in developing both their communities and themselves.



Johnson & Johnson – Facilitating access to education for those experiencing barriers

In September 2008, Johnson and Johnson launched the second 'Access to Education – Bridge to Employment' programme (ATE/BTE) for junior cert students from three schools in north Cork city. The project is modelled on the Johnson & Johnson ATE/BTE projects that have been running in the US for ten years and in Cork since 2005. The programme was tailored to address the specific barriers to education identified and was designed in partnership with students, teachers, parents, third level educational providers, community partners and the local Johnson & Johnson companies. The programme involves:

- Students and their parents take part in site visits, career sessions and third level information days.
- Students are mentored by volunteers drawn from Centocor, DePuy and Janssen.
- Students are supported through mathematics and science revision days held in both Cork Institute of Technology and University College Cork.
- Four students receive a bursary and ongoing support while attending third level.



KPMG – supporting Hospice care in the developing World

KPMG supports Hospice Africa Ireland, which is an organisation that owns and operates three hospices in Uganda and employs approximately 100 people. HAU cares for some 1,400 patients per annum, directly and indirectly, who predominantly suffer from cancer and AIDS. The charity benefited from funds raised at the KPMG Association dinner, a total of €12,500 and KPMG matched this figure, bringing the final amount donated to the charity to €25,000.

KPMG also offers employees the opportunity to pursue a six month secondment with two well known charities, GOAL and Concern. The secondments are to the developing world, allowing employees to utilise their financial and accountancy skills.

KPMG – Supporting disadvantaged members of the community throughout the country

For the past 30 years, the Dublin office has organised an annual Christmas party for elderly people living in its community. 110 local pensioners from the inner city attend a seasonal party held in Stokes Place offices and over 100 people volunteered to help out at the event. KPMG's Cork office organised a Christmas party for the children of St. Anne's Children's ward in Mercy Hospital, and also for the young residents of Edel House. The Galway office worked with the Simon Community on Christmas presents for 40 families who were living in sheltered accommodation.



Manpower – assisting the over 50's to find quality, fulfilling employment

Manpower Mature is a specialist recruitment division aimed at assisting the over 50's to get back into quality and fulfilling employment. Manpower Mature will also work to re-educate and alter the mindset of Irish employers in relation to older workers. Manpower Ireland established Manpower Mature following the results of an internal survey, which showed that just 9% of Irish employers have strategies in place to recruit older workers. The Manpower Ireland Older Worker Survey also revealed that only 26% of employers have implemented retention strategies to keep older staff members participating in the workforce after retirement age.



Marks & Spencer – Offering employment opportunities to the homeless

As a founding member of the UK's Business Action on Homelessness, an initiative of Business in the Community, Marks & Spencer has provided 1,200 work placements over 6 years across 23 cities in the UK and Ireland. A further 130 placements will be offered in 2008 as part of the company's wider employability programme, Marks & Start. Marks & Spencer and Ready for Work have celebrated much success with those involved since its launch in 2004. Many initial placements have resulted in full-time employment, both with M&S and other companies, and its success has had positive impact on M&S staff and customers alike. The business benefits of pioneering a scheme that consistently challenges employability issues and perceptions through real-life, customer-facing experiences are significant.

Marks & Spencer – Underlining the importance of Education

Marks & Spencer have been involved with the Schools' Business Partnership for many years. Many of the staff are involved in the mentoring programme which involves a monthly commitment with individual students. A panel of staff also conducts mock interviews with follow-up feedback sessions. Site visits and talks by staff introduce students to the reality of life M&S and the importance of education to allow them avail of similar opportunities in the future.



Marsh – Contributing to the local community

Marsh wished to contribute to the area in close proximity to their Dublin office. Key projects involving employees included the decorating 'Team Challenge' at St Patrick's National School, Ringsend and work with the Ringsend and Irishtown Community Centre. The centre has been provided with advice and materials to assist them in administering the Centre. Staff are also involved in equipping a library with books donated by employees for the use of the local community, e.g. for children while their parents attend IT classes or for those attending the day centre (mental health).

Guidance on how to draw up a strategic plan for funding was provided to School Street Family Resource Centre. Marsh's charity of the year is ALONE and so far nearly €1,000 has been raised, with more events in the pipeline. Skills transfer from the business sector into the community can be mutually beneficial, bringing deeper knowledge of the marketplace into the business, while addressing a social need that would otherwise fail to be met.



Meteor – Encouraging volunteering among staff to facilitate skills transfer

In October 2007, Meteor was contacted by the Drogheda Partnership, one of 38 Partnership companies established in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage within the Republic of Ireland. The organisation was planning to implement a programme of classes, training over 55's and people with disabilities on how to use a mobile phone. Meteor recognised this as an opportunity to do something hugely beneficial for the local community and for their staff. From October 2007 to April 2008, over 300 people completed the class which was taught on a purely voluntary basis by the Meteor staff in the local Drogheda Store. Demand for the classes was phenomenal, with over 100 people on a waiting list in April for the classes. Feedback from the staff volunteers was hugely positive, with all of them saying that they would gladly volunteer again for similar projects.



Microsoft Ireland – Utilising expertise for greater accessibility

Charitable and non-profit organisations in Ireland, with a few notable exceptions, struggle to take advantage of the benefits of Information Technology. There are three issues: access to software, access to computer hardware and access to skills. Microsoft is working with Enclude (an Irish charity), Symantec and Cisco to operate a programme whereby over 5,000 non-profit and charitable organisations across Ireland can avail of technology donations. These donations include the latest versions of Microsoft's desktop and server products.

The Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher (MAR) programme is designed to increase the number of low-cost computers available to charities and schools, while also keeping serviceable computers out of landfills. It encourages companies to think of donating unused or end-of-life computer equipment which can then be serviced, re-conditioned and installed with new software. These computers can then be donated to a charity or school that might not otherwise be able to afford technology.

Finally, The Digital Literacy Curriculum is designed to address one of the major issues facing non-profits, which is the lack of knowledge about how to use technology. The goal of the curriculum is to teach and assess basic computer concepts and skills so that people can use computer technology in everyday life, to develop new social and economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities. It is available as a free download.

Microsoft – Developing programmes to support the use of technology in the classroom

Microsoft developed Partners in Learning, a programme at primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels which supports the use of technology in the classroom. Initiatives include contributing to the teachnet.ie website (an educational web resource for teachers), providing teacher training through the Innovative Teachers Initiative and participating in the global 'Schools for the Future' programme to raise IT literacy among staff and support the development of an internal culture of innovation and lifelong learning.

Microsoft – Promoting Irish culture by developing an Irish language version of Windows

The growth in importance of IT and the internet has had a positive global impact. For smaller countries and cultures, however, the lack of localised technology can have an adverse effect on local culture, society and business. Microsoft created the Local Language Programme to make local language software available. Irish language versions of Microsoft's Windows and Office products have been produced and were distributed to all primary and secondary schools. Microsoft sponsored Foras Na Gaeilge to develop a community glossary to provide a forum for Irish speakers to participate in creating a technical glossary of software and hardware terminology. Using a volunteer process to build the glossary, supports the following goals:

- Helps local groups to promote and preserve their languages
- Allows volunteers to develop their resumes and portfolios
- Builds community and allows this community to create the official IT terminology database for their local language.



National Irish Bank – Engaging with the Community

National Irish Bank's Community Banking programme is designed to support the development of community and voluntary organisations at a local level. The programme provides sponsorship for one area i.e. knowledge, which they believe is essential for the continued development of a strong local community.

National Irish Bank also works with its Charity of the Year. Supporting one charity annually ensures that the Bank's contribution will make a real difference to the organisation. In 2007 – 2008, the charity is the Meningitis Trust. A staff volunteering programme ensures that staff play an active part in the community around them and can share their skills and knowledge.

National Irish Bank – Supporting programmes for children at risk of leaving school early

National Irish Bank and its sister, Northern Bank, both actively support programmes for children who are at risk of leaving school early. Together with community partners, they help to raise standards by supporting numeracy programmes in schools in the most disadvantaged areas, or working to improve financial literacy among those most at risk of getting into unnecessary debt.



Nestlé – Supporting sporting activities for children

Nestlé Ireland began its partnership with The Irish Schools Athletics Association in 1963. The sponsorship provides the platform for many young athletes to forge their athletic careers in Cross Country and Track & Field. The company has also been sponsoring The KitKat Parks Tennis League since 1987. Professional coaching is provided, with the emphasis on teamwork and learning new skills. Each year, over 25,000 children actively participate in over 160 summer camps nationwide.



O₂ – Making a difference in the Community

The annual O₂ Community Awards celebrate and recognise the achievements of O₂ people in the community at home or abroad. Jason Corbett, from the Technology department, took the top prize at the 2007 O₂ Community Awards for his work with the Children's Lifeline Challenge. The organisation was set up by Jason and his friends to raise money for Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children and they have raised €160,000 for the charity.

O₂ – Engaging staff and facilitating charitable donations and fundraising

In 2005, O₂ selected Irish Autism Action (IAA) as the Charity of Choice for three years. Irish Autism Action is a charity that supports the lives of persons and families affected by autism. A key objective of the partnership, in addition to fundraising, awareness raising and an employee volunteering programme, is to identify a mobile service or technology to assist those with autism to communicate more effectively. The partnership has been very successful, raising over €123,000 through employee fundraising and corporate donations. O₂ also supports the IAA through two payroll giving schemes, including the new 'Cents from Heaven' programme which allows O₂ people to donate spare change from their pay packets.

O₂ – Supporting the O2 Ability Awards, facilitating the employment of people with disabilities

The O₂ Ability Awards recognise businesses striving to change the culture of employment in Ireland. The awards scheme is about encouraging, advising and facilitating organisations, of all backgrounds and sizes, and helping them on the journey to best practice in the employment of people with a disability. To support their work with the O₂ Ability Awards, O₂ set up an internal Diversity Programme. It includes disability awareness training for managers and a recruitment and induction programme for employees with disabilities. In addition, their offices at Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin are fully accessible.



Oracle – Encouraging and supporting employee volunteering in the community

Oracle's corporate volunteer programme, Oracle Volunteers, encourages and supports employee involvement within their local communities. In 2008, employees selected three community partners in Dublin's inner city. The participation included:

- Painting and redecorating play rooms in Lourdes Youth and Community Services Centre in Rutland Street.
- Redecorating and stocking the library in Hill Street Family Resource Centre with books. Building a data base management system for registering books similar to a local library system.
- Supporting Community After Schools Project (CASPr).



Pfizer – Addressing the issue of obesity in children through the Pfizer Way2Go

Pfizer Way2Go programme comprises several strands and has been operating in Ireland since 2005. The most recent segment of the programme in 2008, which comprises a report entitled 'The Voice of Young People', focuses on the attitude of children to diet, lifestyle and obesity. The report research was carried out in six schools, located in Dublin, Cork and Kildare. Both primary and secondary schools were included and the age range of the participants was from eleven to fourteen years.

As a support to the findings of the National Taskforce on Obesity (2005), 'The Voice of Young People' seeks to build the knowledge of obesity by providing a voice to children in terms of their attitudes to health. More specifically, the document presents the results of qualitative research conducted with Irish children in relation to their diet, nutrition and exercise. The goal of the report was to bring children's views into the dialogue about obesity and to seek their opinion on how this can be tackled.

The launch of 'The Voice of Young People' report resulted in intense media coverage. Almost 11 million points of contact were recorded. This programme has significantly contributed to the knowledge base on obesity in Ireland, helping to give policy makers valuable information to inform their decision making when developing public programmes to tackle this increasingly prevalent issue.

Pfizer – Benefiting the Community and enhancing corporate reputation

In emergency situations, individuals are often not capable of appraising staff of their medical history. Pfizer has developed a portable Personal Information Pack (PIP) to

contain all relevant information – a brief medical history, current medication, next of kin, GP and allergies etc. The PIP is stored in the fridge, a location known to emergency staff and one least likely to be compromised in case of fire. The PIP was devised with vulnerable populations in mind such as older people - the majority of whom have medical conditions - and those with long-term illnesses, e.g. diabetes or asthma. 29% of people aged over 65 live alone. The PIP was piloted regionally with the support of local community groups and healthcare providers and rolled out on a national scale through a partnership with the Irish Pharmaceutical Union (IPU). The PIP is now available for purchase at €2 in most pharmacies around Ireland.



[An Post – Supporting community literacy initiatives](#)

An Post decided to focus all monies on one specific area of charitable giving which would be of national and local importance, capable of inclusion in a communications campaign, of relevance to the public, their staff and economy. The area chosen was that of literacy. An integrated communications campaign including advertising, print and web resources all supported by PR, was launched in late September 2007 to promote the National Literacy Awareness Helpline and the supporting website. Media purchase was skewed towards those with literacy issues; however, the general viewing public was also targeted. This solution was provided in alliance with The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) which provided the contact and referral services, as well as any required resource development and delivery. Each aspect has been evaluated using qualitative and quantitative research in addition to call and web traffic statistics. This initiative is now extended by involvement into Education Awards, 4 major community regeneration projects (Moyross included) and a major Transition Year project with Intel and Microsoft.



[PriceWaterhouseCoopers – Engaging with local community groups](#)

PriceWaterhouseCoopers has engaged with Localise, a community-based outreach programme. The first project undertaken is a 7-session youth and community action programme over a 10-week period where employees work with children in a local disadvantaged primary school.



[Savills HOK – Supporting employee volunteering with community groups](#)

Since 2006 Savills have operated a formal, measurable CSR element as part of their Graduate Excellence Programme. The programme is linked to the personal and professional development of the graduates by putting their learning into practice by giving something back to the community.

The graduates work in teams during a period of 6 to 9 months on a property-related project for an assigned community partner. To date the graduates have worked with Focus Ireland, Youthreach, An Cosán, Simon Community and De Paul Trust.

The benefits are real for the business and the community partners:

- The performance of each community project is measured internally and with the community partner
- Employees develop their skills while volunteering and all colleagues are better motivated to work for the organisation and our clients as a result of their experience of volunteering



[Tesco Ireland – Providing support for community based charities](#)

The Make A Wish foundation is Tesco's 2008 Charity of the Year. Every year, Tesco Ireland forms a year-long partnership with a national charity which is community-based and which provides practical support for children, education, healthcare, the elderly or people with disabilities. This becomes the key focus for staff fundraising activities throughout the year, including talent shows, table quizzes, Fun Days, head shaves, sponsored walks and parachute jumps, as well as through collection boxes placed at each of their 1,500 checkouts in their 106 stores for the entire year. Since 2000, over €6.5 million has been raised for 7 charities.



[Ulster Bank – Making a contribution to community organisations](#)

The Community Cashback Awards (CCA) scheme enables employees to get a cash award each year for their chosen charity or community organisation. Depending on how employees help an organisation and whether as an individual or a team, they can apply for a CCA ranging from £100/€150 to £1,000/€1,500 to support their efforts each year. To date, over 750 CCAs resulted in £310,000/€390,000 going to local charities and community groups. The CCA scheme is administered by the payroll section, which issues monthly updates on awards given and charities helped.

The Ulster Bank Staff Charity Funds (SCFs) in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were set up to enable employees to donate to charity and have a say in selecting the charities. The SCFs are independent Funds which administer the monies donated by Ulster Bank Group employees to charity through payroll. In 2007, the Funds, supported by the 1,200 employee members, donated over £356,000/€521,000 to 120 charities including The NI Hospice, The Samaritans, Barnardos, St Vincent de Paul, Aware Defeat Depression and Tiny Life. The Funds donate mainly to charities based within the island of Ireland but also give to worldwide causes in the event of extreme need and major disasters.

[Ulster Bank – Involving young people in community activities](#)

Ulster Bank Group has a community investment theme of “Youth Education and Social Inclusion”. In 2006 it began a partnership with YouthBank on an all-island programme that it committed to fund with an investment of €1.9 million. YouthBank involves young people between the ages of 14 and 25 in community activity through a network of grant-making committees. These committees fund local youth-led projects. YouthBank teaches grant recipients to plan, handle finances and implement the projects that it funds. Ulster Bank also established an employee development strategy whereby staff provide advice and expertise to the young people involved. This helps to develop the skills of the young people managing YouthBank and builds valuable linkages and understanding between commercial banking and local communities. There are currently 15 YouthBanks operating in Ireland with 10 in Northern Ireland and 5 in the Republic. A further 16 are planned, with over 350 young people to be trained and accredited to operate the YouthBanks.

[Ulster Bank – Providing support to schools in disadvantaged areas](#)

Ulster Bank has linked up with RBS Group to bring Supergrounds to Ireland. As part of a £6m world-wide project, Supergrounds transforms existing school playgrounds in disadvantaged areas into attractive and stimulating places where children can learn and play in safety. Each year, Ulster Bank employees nominated primary schools for Supergrounds. They supported teachers and students during a month planning phase, working to meet the needs of the particular school within guidelines from Learning through Landscapes, a UK based school grounds charity. Following a pilot in 2006, transformation programmes at 6 schools in Northern Ireland are complete, a further 6 are underway and two have begun in the Republic of Ireland.

[Ulster Bank – Linking up with community partners to provide musical outreach programme](#)

Ulster Bank has linked up with community partners, The National Concert Hall of Ireland and the Ulster Orchestra, to introduce an exciting musical outreach programme ‘Up the Tempo’, which introduces primary school children throughout Ireland to the joy of music and the experience of playing an instrument. The funding covers a series of musical workshops in schools, delivered by partners during the school year and it culminates in a schools musical performance at the National Concert Hall each June. Each year, employees nominate schools to take part in the workshops. Musicians from the two orchestras, all skilled facilitators, teach the children how to compose music using rhythm, harmony and tempo. Not only do the children learn how to play an instrument, but they also perform as a live orchestra in a lunchtime concert for family and friends on the last day of the school workshops, usually Friday.

[Ulster Bank – Skills transfer initiative to bridge financial capability education gap](#)

Ulster Bank Group has developed ‘Money Sense for Schools’ to bridge the financial capability education gap. It’s an interactive website with a range of activities and quizzes, video clips and activity sheets that teach students about banking services (such as ATM’s, plastic cards and internet banking), budgeting and day-to-day money management, saving and borrowing.



Wyeth – Supporting employees in a wide range of volunteering activities

Wyeth takes an innovative approach to volunteering. The company provides dedicated support and resources and actively encourages employees to share their skills and experience with their communities. Wyeth is active on a number of initiatives. Junior Achievement Ireland programmes help to create a culture of enterprise within the education system. In the 2007/2008 school year, 40 Wyeth employees delivered programmes to over 1,000 students. Challenge Science Roadshow introduces students to a world of creation and discovery and illustrates the importance of science in today's world of work. 16 volunteers delivered structured interactive modules to 75 students over two days in Tallaght IT.

Wyeth also encourages teams from across the company to become involved in community activities as part of their team building days. In the last 12 months, employees have volunteered in excess of 800hrs. supporting organisations like Peamount Hospital, Barretstown and The Carline Centre. For Barretstown, Wyeth volunteers have participated in weekend camps and 10 day programmes. Their role is to encourage and support the children in all their activities, while making sure they are safe and supervised. Wyeth supports Plato, a confidential and safe environment where SME's can benefit from facilitated group learning, training activities, business linkages and networking events. A number of employees are involved as mentors in this programme. Wyeth is a sponsor of national volunteering day – 'Give it a Swirl' day, which took place in September 2008



Vodafone – Vodafone Ireland Foundation social investment programme

The Vodafone Ireland Foundation was set up in 2003 to fund particular registered charities and non-profit organisations, invest in Telemedicine and partner with environmental and conservation groups. The Vodafone Ireland Foundation social investment programme focuses on removing barriers that prevent people from participating fully in society and supporting ventures to improve access to mobile technology, as well as making creative use of technology in the areas of art and culture, community health and employability. An independent board administers the Vodafone Ireland Foundation fund, making recommendations and allocations on a twice yearly basis. The fund has an annual budget of over €500,000.

VIF launched its World of Difference (WOD), programme on the 4th January 2007. The World of Difference is a community scheme, which offers four Irish residents the opportunity to spend one year working for their chosen Irish-registered charity, with their salary (capped at €40,000) and expenses paid by VIF. The 2008 WOD winners are: Bio bank Ireland, GROW Ireland, Doras Luimni and Mayo Intercultural Association. Cancer research, mental health and cultural integration are all complex areas requiring time, energy and resources. Vodafone Ireland Foundation has made it possible for these four passionate people to dedicate one year of their lives to making a difference in these fields.

PART III

Annual Plan 2008 – 2009

Section 1 – Introduction

Following the agreement, in principle, of the Government to the recommendations of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship the implementation structures have been put in place. The Government Chief Whip, Mr. Pat Carey, TD, has been assigned special responsibility for the overall direction of the active citizenship initiative. He will be assisted in this regard by a Steering Group, chaired by Ms. Mary Davis. An Active Citizenship Office has been established in the Department of the Taoiseach to lead the implementation process as proposed by the Taskforce.

A first function of the Steering Group will be to assess progress to date on implementation of the Taskforce recommendations. A number of the public policy recommendations are being effected on a continuing basis. In consultation with Departments, the Steering Group will seek to progress those initiatives that have yet to be fully effected. In terms of private sector initiatives, the Steering Group will work to build on these existing initiatives, to link active citizenship initiatives across all sectors of society and develop participation levels towards the targets suggested by the Taskforce.

Section 2 – Public Policy Advancements

- 2.1 The Steering Group, in consultation with relevant Government Departments, will seek to advance implementation of those recommendations relative to public policy that have yet to be fully effected.

2.2 Participation in the Democratic Process

The study commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on the issue of the establishment of an Electoral Commission will be evaluated when completed and options for decision identified. Given the complex nature of the issue involving possible Government decisions, legislation and administrative adjustments, the timeframe for finalising the matter may be necessarily protracted.

In those circumstances, the Steering Group may wish, in consultation with relevant Government Departments, to consider the feasibility of initiating a national voter education programme to complement existing programmes. Such a programme might be appropriate for application within the education system as part of the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Programme, or as an optional module in any revision of the format and content of Transition Year, which is proposed in the Agreed Programme for Government. The module would include information for students on the history and operating processes of the democratic institutions at local and national level in Ireland, of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

2.3 The Public Service and Citizens

The final report of the Taskforce on Customer Service due for submission to Government in early 2009 will be considered by the Steering Group together with subsequent decisions by the Government. The Steering Group will be supportive of initiatives that further strengthen reforms in this area, including the development of Local Authority Customer Service Charters.

2.4 Community Engagement and Promoting a Sense of Community

The Steering Group will consider the options appropriate to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce for annual active citizenship themes with a focus on activities in a specific active citizenship week. The considerations will include the identification of a theme, the scheduling of the week, mobilising community and other interest groups for activities and large-scale promotion by the media and information literature. Discussions will be continued to address the recommendation for National Presidential Citizen Awards.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is overseeing an audit of community facilities by local authorities under the auspices of County/City Development Boards. The audit, due for completion at end 2008 will be a useful resource in implementing the proposals in the Agreed Programme for Government in regard to the provision of community and recreational facilities. The provision of such facilities would be contingent on resource availability and identification of priority needs in rural and urban areas. The Department also has a critical role in assessing development plans and associated local area plans for compliance with legislative provisions and for consistency with national and regional planning policies and priorities.

The use of school facilities by community groups for community activities and services will be a priority issue which the Steering Group will promote with the Department of Education and Science. It will advocate the speedy introduction of pilot programmes in both urban and rural areas. The viability of such a system may then be assessed and issues arising resolved. Such facilities will benefit communities where community and recreational facilities are currently not available or will supplement existing facilities.

2.5 Education for Citizenship

The Steering Group fully supports the development of the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Programme to a senior cycle subject – Politics and Society – in second level schools. This will provide an important focus for students in the area of civic engagement and democratic processes. It may also provide increased impetus to engage in these areas of activity during Transition Year and in the Young Social Innovators initiatives.

The matter of civic engagement awards outside of those in third level colleges and Gaisce will be the subject of discussions with relevant authorities. Such discussions may interlink with those relating to the National Presidential Citizen Awards.

2.6 Ethnic and Cultural Diversity and the Challenge of Engaging Newcomers

The strategy paper 'Migration Nation' outlines new funding streams to assist sporting bodies, political parties, faith-based groups and local authorities to promote the integration of non-nationals. Substantial funding, to promote the integration of legally resident non-nationals, is being made available in areas where sizeable number of non-nationals reside. Among other purposes, this funding will be used to support the integration initiatives of local community and voluntary organisations.

2.7 Local Civic Participation

Ongoing consultations will be held with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in regard to developments arising from the Green Paper on Local Government.

2.8 Philanthropy

Generating philanthropic support for the active citizenship initiative will be a primary focus for the Steering Group.

2.9 North-South Co-operation

Departments will continue to progress their work on North-South co-operation. The Steering Group will also seek to develop initiatives which create closer ties between communities and organisations in the private sector.

2.10 Research on Civic Engagement

The recommendation for the establishment of a National Observatory on Active Citizenship is at an early stage of consideration. The Central Statistics Office has been requested, on the bases of its experience and expertise in the area of statistical data, to provide its considered views on how the recommendation might be addressed. The Steering Group will then consider the issue further.

Following the completion of the Civic Study in selected second level schools the analysis of the students' responses will be commenced. The outcomes which will be considered by the Steering Group will inform future policy and initiatives in the area of active citizenship.

PART IV

Section 1 – Future Planning

A major task of the Steering Group will be the promotion of the concept of Active Citizenship with a view to increased levels of participation across all sectors of society to achieve the targets suggested by the Taskforce.

The objectives of the active citizenship initiative will be effected over a three-year period through a series of defined activities, as decided by the Steering Group. Of particular importance will be enlisting the continuing support of the business community and philanthropy. An additional focus will be seeking to engage young people in schools and colleges on active citizenship initiatives. In accordance with the suggestions of the Taskforce, the Steering Group in terms of its activities will engage with relevant groups in Northern Ireland and bring an all-island perspective to those activities, where practicable. Similarly, it may be possible to engage with a wider community in Europe and build on existing linkages such as town twinning, student exchanges, European Commission and Council of Europe initiatives.