



Brothers of Charity Services Ireland West Region

Lanesboro Street, Roscommon.

Co. Roscommon F42 XA62

Tel: 090 6628500



Feedback for National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

BOCSI-WR provides services and supports to adults with intellectual disability and / or autism in the Western Region of Ireland (Roscommon & Galway).

We support people to access training, education and employment opportunities in their local communities. People we support face significant barriers to accessing meaningful and paid employment, including:

- lack of access to suitable training and educational opportunities
- lack of access to transport
- lack of workplace accommodations to meet their needs and lack of knowledge of potential employers as to the abilities
- skills and commitment people we support can bring to the workplace

As a support service, we explore innovative ways to enable people with ID and autism to access training and employment. One successful model we use is the development of social enterprises within the region; however, we find it difficult to access the necessary funding and supports to further develop and sustain this employment support model. Hence, we welcome the government's draft national social enterprise policy and the opportunity to comment on it.

Context

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024 (Government of Ireland, 2015) notes that people with disabilities are fifty per cent less likely to be in employment than their peers of working age. It notes particularly low employment rates for those with an intellectual disability. Whilst the Strategy does not specifically mention social enterprise, it does mention the importance of promoting self-employment as a viable option for people with disabilities, of being flexible in the employment supports provided and of working effectively across agency and Department Boundaries.

We would argue that promoting social enterprise is one of the key cornerstones in supporting the training and employment of people with intellectual disability and / or autism, in addition to other employment and training supports, particularly in a rural area with fewer community employment options available. We have found that the 'deficient demand' model of social enterprise is particularly suited to our rural region, providing much needed community services and boosting social capital.

LOVE AND RESPECT IN EVERY ACTION

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland CLG. Kilcornan House, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway Tel: 0761064303

Website: www.brothersofcharity.ie Company Registration No: 344780, Registered in Dublin, Ireland CHY No:17440

Directors: Bro. A. T. Hassett (Chairperson), M. Allen, J. Barry, K. Brennan, S. Hayes, P. McGinley.

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We agree with the Draft Policy that social enterprise has significant benefits in supporting those most vulnerable and marginalised in society and enhancing social capital in each community. We work closely with partner agencies (e.g. Roscommon Leader Partnership/SICAP) in community development/social enterprise projects that are proving to be of significant benefit to the people we support and others in the community.

Policy Objective 1 – Creating Awareness of Social Enterprise

In implementing this Policy, the Government will work with social enterprise stakeholders to help raise awareness of social enterprise, social entrepreneurship and social innovation in Ireland.

Our Comments:

1. Ensure that service providers for people with Autism/Intellectual Disability are included in local and national social enterprise networks to support the sharing of knowledge, innovation and resources.
2. Promote the ability and skill of people with Autism/Intellectual Disability to contribute to their local community through social enterprise. This could include a. creating awareness amongst government agencies and local authorities and b. the development of recognition programmes such as Social Enterprise Awards for this cohort of people.
3. Specifically include policy initiatives around promoting and supporting the development of social enterprises by people with Autism/Intellectual Disability
4. Ensure cross-governmental awareness of the potential of social enterprise to support employment, community inclusion, increased independence through a living wage and the enhancement of local social capital for people with Autism/Intellectual Disability.
5. Support academic research into innovative ways of developing social enterprise supports and opportunities for people with Autism/Intellectual Disability through the provision of bursaries/grants for such research.
6. Disseminate examples of international best practice in promoting social enterprise opportunities for people with Autism/Intellectual Disability

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Policy Objective 2 – Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise

The type of measures which the Government could take to improve business and leadership supports for social enterprises, to improve access to finance and funding for social enterprises and to improve access to markets.

Our Comments:

1. Ensure that information on business supports is circulated to service providers for people with Autism / Intellectual Disability. Ensure information is accessible and in easy read format.
2. Develop county interagency collaboration networks to enable service providers for people with Autism/Intellectual Disability to join these and learn from the other agencies in the network
3. Provide training and mentoring opportunities through these collaboration networks and national training and leadership opportunities
4. Set up a specific funding stream to support the set-up of social enterprises by people in marginalised / socially vulnerable groups, including those with Autism / Intellectual Disability
5. Provision of market research and business feasibility supports for people with Autism / Intellectual Disability to set up a social enterprise or to scale up / grow their social enterprise

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Policy Objective 3- Achieving Better Policy Alignment

Our Comments:

1. More flexibility in terms of the hours required to be worked by people with disabilities in funded employment schemes (e.g. CSP) that support social enterprises
2. A recognition within health funding policy that supporting social enterprise development amongst people with Autism / Intellectual Disability can have significant impact on positive health outcomes
3. A plan for the promotion and development of social enterprise through "New Directions"
4. Ensure consideration is given to both the economic AND social impacts of social enterprise projects
5. Sharing of good practice from the EU
6. Support for easy access to needs analysis for potential social enterprises in communities and the location of 'deficient demand' opportunities for social enterprise development by people with Autism / Intellectual Disability
7. Ensure that a representative (s) from services providers for people with Autism / Intellectual Disability is included in all national groups for social enterprise policy development.

Concluding Comments

We welcome the publication of this Draft Enterprise Policy and the opportunity to comment on it. We strongly recommend the inclusion of the needs of people with Autism / Intellectual Disability in policy development in this area, given the potential benefits in health and social outcomes for this socially vulnerable group.

We are happy to meet with the Department to further discuss the above comments on the Draft Policy.

May 2019

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