

SSP Draft Submission:

Response to National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

Introduction

Southside Partnership DLR is delighted to welcome the government's National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022. We look forward to Social Enterprise being developed as a specific sector in Irish economy and society and, following, is our contribution to the public consultation.

Southside Partnership DLR has over 20 years' experience supporting and working with local community groups, social enterprises, social entrepreneurs, charities, local and national agencies, plus DEASP enterprise support schemes and work experience programmes. Established in 1996 we are recognised as a source of quality supports within our local area, and have always worked with social enterprises. In 2017 we committed to establishing long-term dedicated social enterprise supports, increasing awareness and understanding within our county, while developing expert and accessible services in response to local needs. With key, experienced personnel on staff, and with limited resources, we have been able to put the following supports in place, focusing on (a) the social entrepreneur's own development, (b) the business / enterprise planning required, (c) the legal structures and requirements to establish and run a social enterprise), and (d) local needs:

- Training (individual workshops and 6-week Starting a Social Enterprise training programme).
- Mentoring (one-to-one support to social entrepreneurs, owner / founders of community groups).
- Networking (peer support, plus introductions to established social enterprises).
- Information Sessions (to raise awareness, with social enterprise CEO's present to increase understanding and answer questions).
- Information (regular email bulletins that advise clients of funding; information / links to information; additional training opportunities etc).
- Annual local social enterprise showcase, information and networking event.
- With several staff members sitting on the boards of local social enterprises and community groups, this expertise is able to be fed back to social enterprise clients.
- Referral routes to other organisations and their services.

In addition, Southside Partnership DLR is the managing agent of Community Employment Scheme (PICES) and the implementing body for the Tús scheme (Dún Laoghaire Rathdown),. Tús can provide invaluable staffing to social enterprises and CSP organisations and our experience and contacts are unique to our area.

Southside Partnership DLR is a member of the ILDN Social Economy working group, and our Social Enterprise Advisor is also a founder of the Social Enterprise Advisor's network – a network of LDC personnel from (currently) the greater Dublin area, Wicklow and Carlow – whose mission is to support members, creating an energetic network that encourages members and explores opportunities for collaboration and learning through shared experience. As a member, we also support the ILDN Submission on the National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022.

Networks and Collaborations

Southside Partnership DLR is passionate about creating collaborative links. We continuously network both locally and nationally to strengthen our ability to work in partnership with other agencies and service providers, delivering the best supports possible to our clients. For the purposes of this document, we have established close working relationships and partnerships with all of the CSPs in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, established social enterprises, and pre-start-up social entrepreneurs. Also agencies, including:

- DLR County Council
- DLR IADT
- Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB
- DLR Local Enterprise Office
- Dun Laoghaire Chamber of Commerce
- Blackrock Education Centre
- Department of Employment & Social Protection + the 3 local Intreo offices in our area
- DLR County Childcare
- DLR Volunteer Centre
- DLR Public Participation Network
- Springboard (via Innovation Centre, UCD)
- Community Employment schemes

On a national level we liaise with all ILDN management and member organisations, plus:

- Irish Social Entrepreneurs Network
- The Wheel
- An Cosan
- Clann Credo
- Community Foundation Ireland
- Social Innovation Fund Ireland
- Social Entrepreneurs Ireland
- Plato
- B-Nest, Limerick
- Boardmatch

Southside Partnership DLR is ideally placed to support social enterprise individuals, groups and organisations both at a national level and, uniquely in DLR, in ensuring quality on the ground supports – we have the expertise, experience, networks, contacts and local knowledge – and we are already doing it.

With policy led structures, clarification of the sector, supports and resources we can build on the foundations we have in place and are excited at the opportunities that the National Policy on Social Enterprise will give us in our area – Dún Laoghaire Rathdown.

Following are our comments and feedback on the proposed National Social Enterprise Policy 2019-2022:

POLICY SUBMISSION

General observations:

Reference	Comment	Our feedback & suggestions
Defining Social Enterprise	We query the inclusion of the words ' <i>or having an ambition to trade</i> '. Our understanding of social enterprise is that it is the intention to trade, not the alternative of having ambition to trade, that sets a social enterprise apart from other socially led organisations / charities. We find this phrase adds to the confusion re social enterprise, rather than aids understanding.	This phrase is deleted.
	We find that the phrase 'if dissolved, it must transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission' is aspirational rather than practical.	This phrase is changed to 'if dissolved, it must attempt to transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission'.
Consolidation of responsibility for social enterprise	We welcome the establishment of the Social Enterprise Unit within DRCD. Prior to the release of this policy document, there was discussion of a proposed new national entity with responsibility for social enterprise, made up of stakeholders. It, however, is not referred to in the document.	Clarity of a new entity including the definition of 'stakeholders', and the role of social enterprise representatives. We believe that the sector needs to be driven by social enterprises themselves, and that any new entity reflects this.
	Provision of additional funding to properly resource the supports to the sector, including the development of supports (for example training options) for service providers is not addressed.	For the social enterprise sector in Ireland to meet its 'significant potential to grow and develop' the issue of adequate resourcing to the sector and for the support services has to be addressed.

Specific Observations:

Policy Objective 1

Creating awareness of social enterprise

1-3

There is a need for a coherent branding strategy for social enterprise, starting with defining social enterprise as a sector in itself. This is a vital step in raising awareness and developing clarity.

Prior to the release of this policy document, there was discussion of a proposed new entity with responsibility for social enterprise. It, however, is not referred to in the document.

As well as a *'wide range of activities which social enterprises are involved in'*, there are also a wide range of business structures a social entrepreneur can choose from. However, none of these address social enterprise specifically and, therefore, further complicate the process of establishing and running a social enterprise while adding to the confusion experienced by social enterprises themselves, agencies such as Revenue, and by legal professionals advising the sector.

Southside Partnership, as a member of the ILDN, has been involved with the Back to Work Enterprise Awards, and the National Social Enterprise Forum and Exhibition (2018). Both give the opportunity to highlight activity in the sectors and in our area of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, plus the quality of businesses and business owners.

Define social enterprise as a sector distinct from the community & voluntary sector.

Clarity of a new entity including the role / inclusion of stakeholders (and social enterprises), plus its proposals for branding of the social enterprise sector.

The need for a business structure that is specific to social enterprises, similar to a Community Interest Company (CIC) that exists in the UK. This will contribute greatly to the clarity, branding, and building awareness, of the social enterprise sector.

Community Interest Company (CIC) UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise>

Social Enterprise Awards that would have regional as well as national winners, across several categories would have the dual benefit of raising awareness of the sector, while highlighting local social enterprises, throughout the application stage as well as when giving announcements of winners.

We support holding an annual social enterprise forum. As the ILDN has successfully run a social enterprise forum with plans underway for a second forum in 2019, further forums could benefit from the infrastructures and learning already in place if run in partnership with the ILDN.

Initiating new social enterprises

4-6

The priority at the moment is to put structure and support in place for new social entrepreneurs and community leaders – the pre-start-up, feasibility, and early start-up stages of creating a new social enterprise, which are completely under resourced.

'At community level, programmes such as LEADER and SICAP... support the creation of new social enterprises, including through the provision of incubation space and facilities'. The ability to provide these types of spaces is uneven across the country, and dependent on financial resources as well as multiple stakeholder commitment. As a result there are very few facilities of this kind available to social enterprises.

'Supporting social innovation and social enterprise start-ups'... We would like to make the point that these are not the same thing.

A stronger emphasis throughout the draft plan on supporting new & early start up social enterprises as, with new organisations being established, future generations will have additional role models and real life, on the ground experiences from which to learn. This is also an area of work where LDCs, and Southside Partnership DLR can make a real and long-lasting impact.

Specific funding towards the creation and development of Social Enterprise Hubs - possibly as social enterprises in themselves – is needed. The hubs would become the 'one-stop-shops' for locally provided and accessible social enterprise information, supports and training. We envisage that the hubs would also have the potential to generate income from (a) renting space - to social enterprises needing a hot desk or more regular work / meeting space; plus to stakeholders and local organisations looking for meeting / training rooms and (b) provision of a café area (if the space allowed for this) to encourage informal networking while being open to the public – further raising awareness of, and promoting, social enterprises. Southside Partnership DLR, as in many parts of Ireland, is the only organisation in our local area providing specific supports to the social enterprise sector. We propose that LDCs be the initiators and developers of social enterprise hubs in partnership with local authorities, the LEOs, local organisations (for example the PPNs) and education bodies

Stronger differentiation between social enterprise and social innovation.

Policy Objective 2
**Growing and
Strengthening Social
Enterprise**
7-10

'There is a need... for information to be provided on the business supports available to social enterprises and for the development of further supports...'
These supports are already in place via LDCs, specifically in this submission, from Southside Partnership in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. Our organisation has in-house skills and expertise provided by experienced staff members in both social enterprise and enterprise; we have a service provider developing dedicated social enterprise supports; we are the go-to organisation regarding the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, enterprise training and mentoring; we have over 20 years' experience providing business planning and business plan support to individuals, organisations, and businesses. Southside Partnership understands the different mind-set of a social entrepreneur and the supports needed by a social enterprise, and have the knowledge, contacts, networks and experience to provide these. In addition, we have an understanding of communities and community enterprise that is lacking in government because we are on the ground. We are informed and ideally placed to provide the coherent supports required in the policy document.

For LDCs (including Southside Partnership) to be designated as the locally available 'one-stop-shops' for providing social enterprise supports to new and existing social enterprises, communities, and organisations.

For the LDCs to be properly resourced, including financially, to create a long-term plan in order to supply, deliver, initiate and promote tailored, long-term social enterprise supports; to conduct ongoing research identifying local need and gaps in supports; to plan and address these gaps including needs related to leadership and governance.

For a distinction to be made between start-up and scale-up social enterprises and highlighted in the policy, including the different supports required for each stage of an organisation's development.

**Access to finance and
funding**
11-14

There is no mention of enabling qualifying social entrepreneurs access to the DEASP Back to Work Enterprise Allowance / Short Term Enterprise Allowance schemes. At the moment, depending on the Intreo office or Case Officer, if an individual wishes to start a social enterprise they are being refused approval for the schemes.

That, a social enterprise is deemed as being a valid business model when an application is made to the BTWEA or STEA schemes. In addition, the Enterprise Support Grant (ESG), available once an individual is on either scheme, will provide an opportunity for start-up grant funding at a critical stage.

For there to be a commitment to cross government department awareness and understanding of social enterprise, including the provision of training to front line staff.

Many social enterprises are not looking to commit to a long-term high interest rate loan option, especially new and early start-up organisations.

Loans need to have interest rates in keeping with the EU average (at the moment, Irish lender interest rates are 1.5% above this average)

Access to finance and funding ctd

11-14

The application process for social lenders is complicated and time consuming

Social enterprises find social lenders are risk averse

Additional options for funding to be considered, with providers being more accepting of the risks related to social enterprise

Access to feasibility, pre and early start-up funding needs to be addressed, as this is almost non-existent for new social enterprises.

The Community Services Programme (CSP) needs to be reopened for processing of applications, with consideration given to the balance between management responsibilities and addressing information needed by Pobal, including better support to founders / managers.

The issue of displacement isn't addressed in the policy

Guidance and direction are needed regarding displacement issues for the social enterprise sector

Community Benefit Clauses are not mentioned in the policy document

Specific guidance, planning, introduction and inclusion of Community Benefit Clauses within all tenders for public spending

Enabling market opportunities

15-17

Promotion of the benefits, and encouragement of Community Benefit Clauses to commercial businesses

Policy objective 3 Achieving better policy alignment

18-19

We support the proposal to have strong links with EU policy

To have clear supports in place to encourage and enable social enterprises in a position to scale up, to take advantage of opportunities arising from a closer alignment with European policy.

Data and impact

20-21

We support having relevant and current research data on a social enterprise sector

To have clearly defined terms of reference, methodology and aims for any research, (including mapping) that can be easily implemented in each local area.