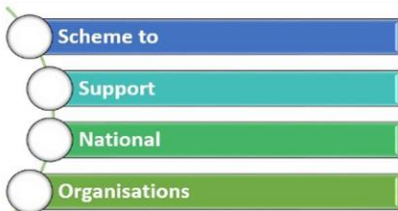


# Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector (SSNO)

Annual Progress Report  
2017 - 2018



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



## Acknowledgements

The Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal would like to thank all of the organisations funded under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) for providing information to Pobal through their monitoring reports. This information allows for reporting on the overall progress of the scheme each year.

July 2019

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## Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the progress and impact of the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) funding in the second year of the current programme cycle (2016-2019). The report is based on data collated from the annual monitoring progress reports submitted by the SSNO funded organisations (covering the period from July 2017 to June 2018). The Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered by Pobal. 71 organisations have received funding of over €10.9m to date, with over €10.5m reported as spent at the end of June 2018.

### *Headline figures (June 2017-July 2018)*

- 163 staff positions were funded across the SSNO supported organisations in this reporting period, with SSNO funding accounting for an average of 72% of the costs of these staff.
- SSNO funded organisations most often worked with people with physical/sensory/acquired disabilities or chronic illnesses (14%), people affected by poverty and social exclusion (12%), and children and young people (9%).
- SSNO funded organisations spent an average of 34% of their staff time on frontline service provision, 16% on advocacy activities and 15% of their time on awareness raising.
- 77% of SSNO funded organisations stated that their activities had expanded as a result of SSNO funding, with half of these groups reporting the provision of services to a greater number of people (an increase of 7% from the previous reporting period). 39% reported that they offered new activities or services and 11% reported that SSNO funding enabled them to hire additional staff (a reduction of 6% from the previous period).
- 83% of organisations reported improving the quality of the services they offer. Of these, 41% reported that they were able to improve staff capacity using the funding and 29% reported the ability to improve the evidence base from which they designed their programmes and services. The proportion of groups that adopted a model of quality standards doubled from 8% to 16% in this reporting period. There was a corresponding decrease in the number of groups engaging in stakeholder consultation (from 20% to 14%).
- Organisations were asked what they had achieved in this period that would not have been possible without SSNO funding. The most common responses were information provision to their target groups; networking/collaborative approaches; and education/training initiatives.
- When asked about the main challenges SSNO funded organisations faced during this period, the key issues included: meeting increased regulatory compliance (with GDPR

compliance emerging as a key issue); working with limited resources; increased demand for services; and staffing/recruitment issues.

- Key areas of learning from this reporting period included: establishing strong links and working collaboratively with government departments, agencies and service providers; the benefits of using data and evidence to improve services; reviewing and improving their policies and procedures, and the importance of longer term and strategic planning to strengthen the sustainability of organisations.

## 1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the progress and impact of the *Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector (SSNO)* during the second year of this three year programme cycle (2016-2019). The report is based on the data collated from annual monitoring progress reports, covering the period July 2017 to June 2018. The report covers financial and non-financial aspects of programme delivery and provides a summary of the achievements, activities, challenges and learning as reported by SSNO funded organisations during this period. The report also contains comparisons to the data from the previous period (2016/2017), highlighting any significant changes between reporting periods.

### 1.1 Background

The current round of the *Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector (SSNO)* was launched in July 2016 and covers a three year period up to June 2019. The scheme is under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development<sup>1</sup> (hereafter referred to as 'the Department'). The SSNO forms a key element of the State's support for the role of the community and voluntary sector in contributing to the development of strong and vibrant civil society and in improving outcomes for those most disadvantaged.

The overall aim of the SSNO is to provide multi-annual funding for the **core costs of national organisations** in the community and voluntary sector, with a focus on organisations that provide supports to those who are disadvantaged. A total programme budget of **€16,660,913** was made available across a three year funding period. Applicants were eligible to apply for grants of between €20,000 and €90,000 per annum. Pobal's role is to administer funding under the scheme on behalf of the Department, to support national organisations in the sector around three key strategic priorities:

- Frontline service delivery;
- Organisational development;
- Policy development.

### 1.2 Purpose of the SSNO funding

The Department designed the Scheme to Support National Organisations with the aim of providing multi-annual funding towards the **core costs** of national organisations in the community and

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<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for SSNO was moved to the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) in July 2017. Previously responsibility for the programme was with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG).

voluntary sector to assist them to operate and carry out their core activities. Core costs relate to those expenditure items that are considered critical to the operation and day-to-day running of an organisation. In the context of the SSNO, core costs may refer to: the salary of core staff members, specific non-salary costs attributed to core staff and contributions towards overhead costs. In practice, SSNO funding is primarily used towards funding the salary of core member(s) of staff, with a lesser percentage contributing to various organisational overheads. Further information on categories of expenditure is contained in the financial summary in Chapter 3. The SSNO's primary focus is the provision of core funding to national organisations that demonstrate good governance and deliver services and supports that have a focus on one or more of the following:

- Addressing poverty;
- Social exclusion;
- Promoting equality.

Organisations funded under the scheme also had to demonstrate evidence of their extensive reach and engagement across the country and the need for core funding to ensure the sustainability and the on-going operation of the organisation. 71 national organisations are currently in receipt of SSNO funding<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.3 Reporting and monitoring requirements

SSNO grantees are required, as part of their 3 year grant agreement with Pobal, to report on the SSNO funding in relation to financial expenditure and performance monitoring. The following **financial** and **non-financial** reports are submitted to Pobal via an on-line portal:

- Financial returns on a six-monthly basis.
- Non-financial monitoring report (Annual Monitoring Form) on an annual basis.

The SSNO Monitoring Framework Reference Group, which was established in 2016, recommended that the monitoring and reporting framework for the programme should focus on the impact of the funding on the organisation itself, rather than the impact in terms of the number of members, beneficiaries, or service users. This was in part due to the diverse nature of services, target groups and organisation sizes, and also recognition that the SSNO organisations are generally in receipt of multiple funding streams. As a result of the review, the annual monitoring form contains two sections: 1) Details of the profile of the organisation overall (not just in relation to SSNO funding), including information on the organisation's target groups/communities of interest and staff

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<sup>2</sup> Note: one of the funded organisations subsequently engaged in a transfer of undertakings to another group.

activities; and 2) Details of the impact of the SSNO funding on the work of the organisation, including achievements made in the past 12 months which would not have been possible without the funding.

In addition to the above reporting requirements, **verification visits** are carried out by Pobal staff to a sample of SSNO funded organisations each year. Two SSNO funded organisations received verification visits during this reporting period.

The information presented in this report is based principally on the data reported in the annual monitoring reports submitted by 70 SSNO funded organisations<sup>3</sup> covering the second 12 months of their contract (1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018), as well as a high level summary of the key findings from the financial reports as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

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<sup>3</sup> One organisation had not submitted the annual non- financial monitoring report at the time of writing this report and therefore the data in this report is based on the submissions of 70 organisations.



## 2. Profile of SSNO funded organisations

This section gives an overview of the types of organisations in receipt of funding under the SSNO, and provides an overall profile of the activities and target groups for the organisation as a whole (i.e. not solely in relation to SSNO funding). A broad range of organisations are funded under the Department's Scheme to Support National Organisations, delivering a variety of valuable supports and activities across the community and voluntary sector. A full list of these organisations is available in Appendix I of this report. There is significant diversity, both in the nature and size of the organisations funded and in the sectors they represent, which include:

- Community and Rural Development
- Social Enterprise
- Disability
- Education, Youth and Children
- Equality
- Older People
- Health

These national organisations often work as umbrella bodies with a network of member organisations based around the country. SSNO funded organisations work directly and indirectly with individuals across a range of target groups. Many of the organisations work closely with community & voluntary organisations, providing guidance and support to their respective sectors.

### 2.1 Staff time supporting activities

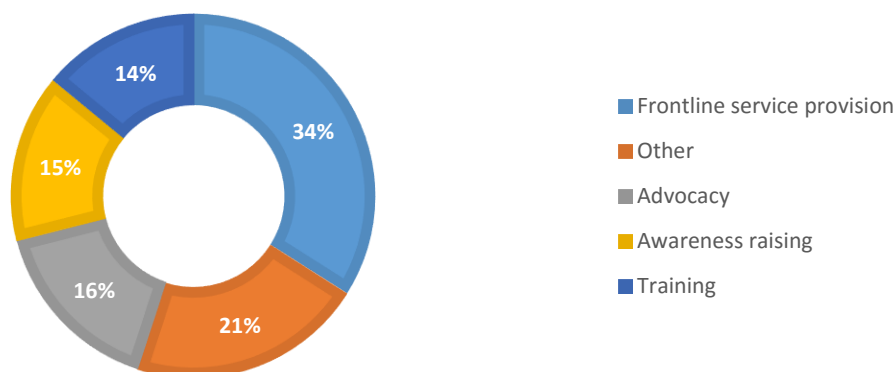
SSNO funded organisations were asked to estimate the percentage of staff time<sup>4</sup> that was spent undertaking or supporting the following activities: advocacy; awareness raising; frontline service provision; training; and 'other' activities.

Figure 2.1 below shows the estimated **average** percentage of time spent by staff across all groups for each of these activities. Frontline service provision was the category with the highest average percentage of staff time at 34%. 21% of organisations' staff time was spent on 'other' activities. Examples cited under 'other' covered a range of activities including governance, fundraising, networking and volunteer support. 16% of staff time was spent on advocacy related activities and further 15% on awareness raising. Training activities had the lowest average percentage reported (14%). These activity categories were very similar to those reported in the 2016/2017 period.

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<sup>4</sup> This included staff time for all positions in the organisation – both SSNO funded and non-SSNO funded

Figure 2.1: Average % of staff time supporting activities in 2017/2018



Further detail on activities carried out by organisations which the SSNO funding enabled is contained in Chapter 4.

## 2.2 Primary target groups

Organisations in receipt of SSNO funding support a broad range of target groups across a variety of sectors. Organisations were asked to report on the **primary** target group or community of interest that they focused their activities on. Figure 2.2 displays the breakdown of primary target groups supported across the SSNO programme. It is acknowledged that most organisations funded under the SSNO work with multiple target groups from this list. The results here provide a snapshot of the range of people and groups supported through the programme, including some of the most disadvantaged individuals and communities.

As shown in Figure 2.2 above, 14% of SSNO funded organisations reported their primary target group as ‘people with physical, sensory or acquired disabilities or those living with chronic illness’. 12% of organisations reported their primary target group as ‘people affected by poverty and social exclusion’. 9% reported working with ‘children and young people’ as their primary focus. 7% of organisations reported their primary target groups as ‘migrants/refugees/asylum seekers and minority ethnicities’.

The ‘other’ category was selected by 14% of organisations. The high number of entries under this category reflects the broad nature of the programme as well as the inherent challenge in accurately capturing the breadth of the work and people supported through the scheme, particularly where specialised supports are being provided. Examples of some of the target groups listed under the “other” category included: ‘Prisoners, their families and those involved in the penal system’;

'People who stutter'; 'Parents seeking equality based school places for their children'; and 'Healthcare professionals'.

Figure 2.2: Primary target groups of SSNO funded organisations



Pobal provided additional categories under the primary target group list in this year's annual monitoring report, to reflect the many target groups worked with by organisations funded under SSNO. The extensive list of target groups and the additional entries under the 'other' category highlight that the SSNO is a far reaching programme providing supports to a range of disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups.

## 2.3 Number of people and organisations worked with

Organisations were asked to report on the number of a) people, b) community groups and c) member organisations (for umbrella organisations) worked with. Table 2.1 shows the number of individuals, community/voluntary groups, and member organisations worked with during the reporting period, *alongside* the reported primary target group<sup>5</sup> for organisations. This table is arranged by the number of member organisations worked with, as most of the SSNO funded organisations are umbrella bodies, providing supports to a network of member organisations across the country. While some organisations work directly with individuals experiencing disadvantage, others work indirectly by supporting community and voluntary organisations working in a specialised area.

Table 2.1 data provided here gives an overview of the reach of the organisations funded under the SSNO. It should be noted that this information is gathered to provide a profile of the organisations supported under the SSNO and these outputs are not directly attributable to SSNO funding, given that many of these organisations are in receipt of multiple funding streams.

The figures presented here may appear high due to the fact that these are organisations with a national reach, many of whom provide programmes and services to large swathes of the population. In addition, some organisations provide website and social media based services and supports to their target groups, particularly in the area of youth work, and therefore the numbers of people worked with are inclusive of the number of visits to websites or social media sites<sup>6</sup>.

Table 2.1: Member organisations, individuals and groups worked with

Primary target group of organisation	Number of member organisations	Number of individuals	Number of C&V groups
Rural dwellers	3,103	72,126	2,931
Charities and community & voluntary organisations	1,486	8,285	4,284
Children and young people	1,111	1,257,489	290
People affected by poverty and social exclusion	1,038	12,784	2,093

<sup>5</sup> Please note that the figures provided in Table 2.1 are not directly linked to the primary target groups listed. Organisations were asked to report on their primary target group and were asked, separately, to report the number of individuals and groups they worked with. Many SSNO funded organisations work with multiple target groups and these figures represent the **overall** number of people and groups worked with by the organisation as a whole.

<sup>6</sup> Note: The reported number of individuals worked with by organisations with the primary target group of 'children and young people', includes the number of web-site visits which include a high level of users each year.

Older people	854	70,066	801
Other	492	36,043	1,186
People with an intellectual or learning disability	383	9,616	472
Homeless people and those at risk of homelessness	266	42,875	414
Carers	225	26,879	141
The unemployed	207	12,573	263
Migrants/refugees/asylum seekers/minority ethnicities	189	17,368	504
People with physical/sensory/acquired disabilities or chronic illnesses	163	508,774	2,918
Victims of domestic violence	69	24,423	334
People with a mental health condition	63	1,769	32
LGBT community	49	6,352	7
General Public	29	49,041	490

Due to the diverse nature of the work and supports provided by the organisations funded by the SSNO, a clearer picture of the benefit of SSNO funding emerges when we look at the impact of the funding on the organisations themselves rather than focusing on the numbers of people or groups worked with/targeted. Further detail on the impact of the SSNO funding in relation to the SSNO organisations' quality and quantity of services provided, is contained in Chapter 4 of this report.

### 3. Financial summary

All SSNO funded organisations were required to submit a financial report to Pobal on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018 showing expenditure for the period from 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2018. This section provides an overview of the content of the financial reports submitted.

A total of **€16,660,913** in grant aid was awarded to the 71 SSNO funded groups covering the three-year contract period. As at 30th June 2018, **€10,907,544** had been paid out and 97.01% of this amount (**€10,581,472**) had been reported back as spend (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1: Total SSNO budget and spend reported to 30th June 2018

Budget awarded	To 30th June 2018 paid	Spend reported	% Spend
€16,660,913	€10,907,544	€10,581,472	97.01%

Grant allocations for the three year funding period ranged from €84,445 up to €270,000.

#### SSNO expenditure areas

SSNO expenditure is eligible under the following three categories:

- **Staffing:** this relates to core posts that are central to the work of the organisation. Eligible costs include: salary, employers PRSI, pensions and recruitment.
- **Administration:** This will typically include the expenses of day-to-day running of an organisation including stationery, staff training and travel and subsistence.
- **Facilities:** This covers the general running costs/overheads of an organisation which includes: light and heat, telephone, rent and insurance etc.

Table 3.2 shows that the vast majority (92.5%) of expenditure across SSNO supported organisations to date, is accounted for by salaries. This is in line with expectations, given that the primary aim of the SSNO is to provide funding towards the core costs of the organisation.

Table 3.2: Categories of expenditure reported

Budget category	Spend to June 2018	%
Salaries	€9,794,491	92.5%
Administration	€672,765	6.3%
Facilities	€114,217	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>€10,581,472</b>	<b>100%</b>

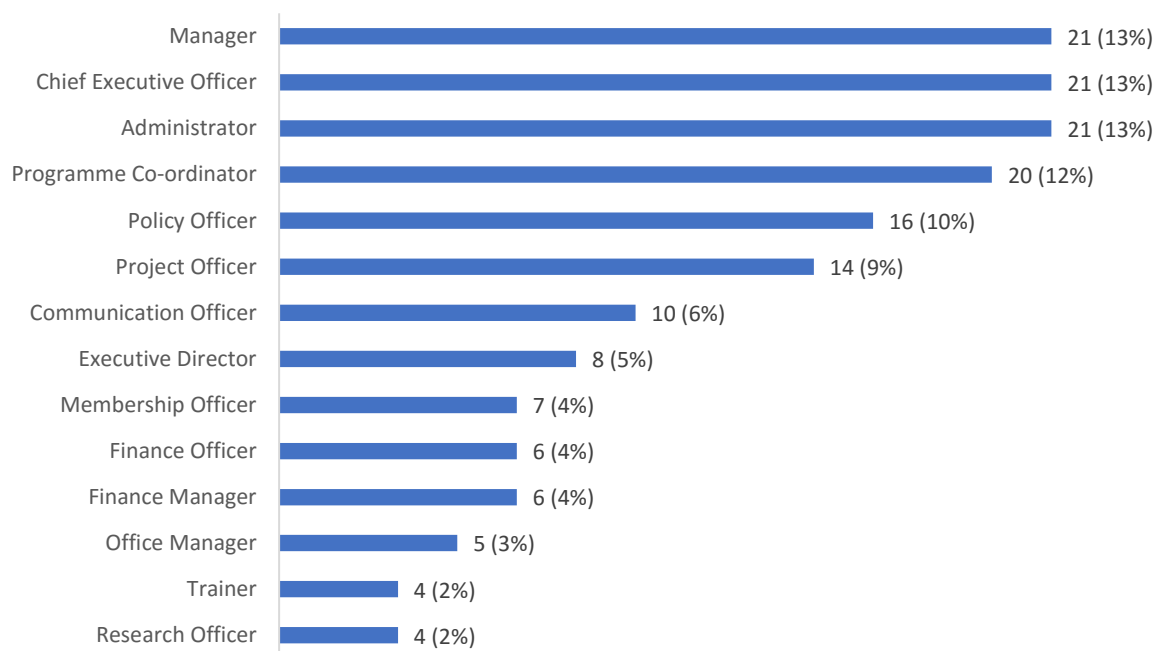
## 4. Impact of SSNO funding – staffing, activities & achievements

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of the SSNO funding on organisations in terms of the staff positions supported, and their activities and achievements, as described in the annual monitoring reports. The annual monitoring form is designed to capture the ways in which services were enhanced by the SSNO funding, for example, through the expansion of activities and improvements to the quality of service provision to target audiences.

### 4.1 Staffing positions supported

A large proportion of SSNO funding is used to support core staffing positions in the organisation (with staff salaries accounting for almost 93% of programme expenditure). Organisations were asked to report on each staff position supported by SSNO, including the percentage of the position funded, the number of contracted weekly hours and the category of work that the position falls under. A total of **163 staff positions** were supported by SSNO funding during this reporting period. This equated to a total of **112.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions**<sup>7</sup>. Figure 4.1 shows the number and percentage of positions supported within each category of work.

Figure 4.1: SSNO funded staff positions by category of work

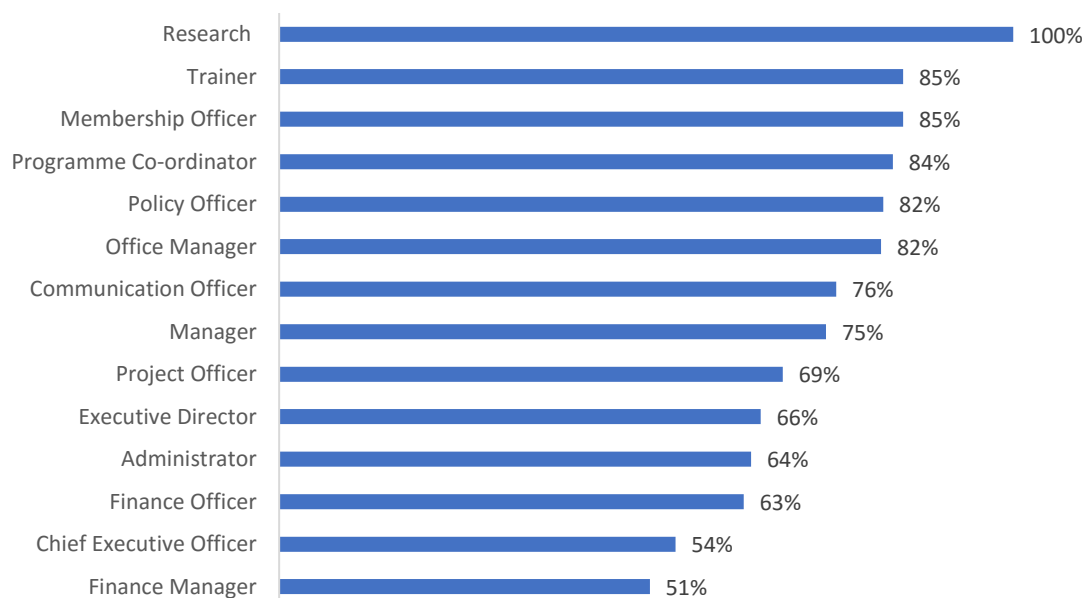


<sup>7</sup> This FTE calculation was based on the total number of working hours reported divided by a 40 hour week.

Almost a third of positions supported by the SSNO were at management and senior management level (35%). At senior management level, this included the positions of CEO (13%), and Executive Director (5%). Managerial positions included Manager (13%) and Finance Manager (4%). The remainder of positions funded covered many aspects of programme delivery, including: Programme co-ordination (12%); Policy and research positions (12%); General administration, finance and support positions (26%); Communications (6%); and Training (2%). The positions funded were broadly in line with those supported in the previous reporting period with some slight shifts reported in the 2017/2018 period. There was an increase in the proportion of administrative and project support positions 23% to 26% (administrators, finance officers and project officers) and a slight decrease in training and research positions (reduction of 2% each).

Organisations were asked to report on the proportion of each position funded by the SSNO. Overall, SSNO funding accounted for an average of 72% of the cost of staff positions during this reporting period. This figure remained constant from the previous period. Figure 4.2 below shows the average proportion of positions funded under each category of work, ranging from 51% for 'Finance Manager' posts to 100% for 'Research' positions. Organisations were also asked to report any staffing changes between 2017 and 2018 in terms of the percentage funded by the SSNO. There was no significant change in the proportion of SSNO funding towards each position reported between 2017 and 2018.

Figure 4.2: Average proportion of positions funded by SSNO

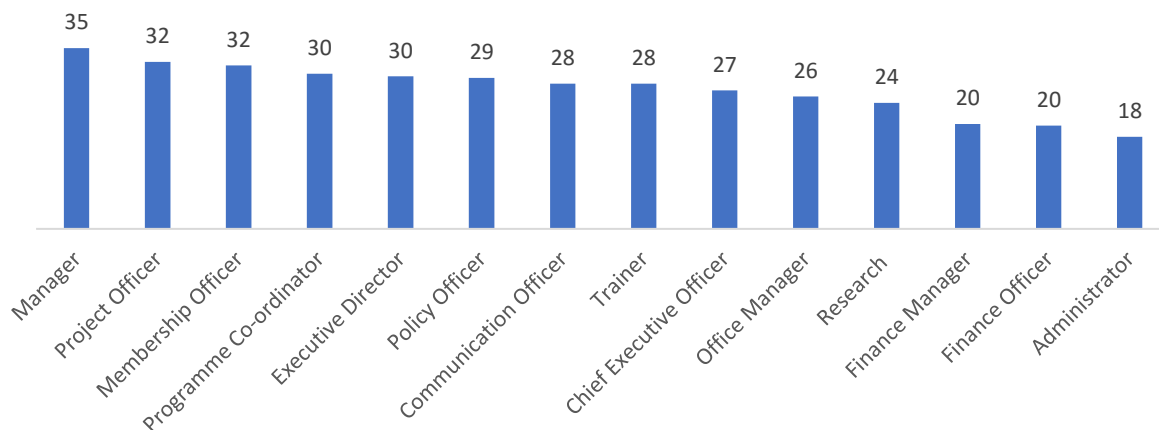


Organisations were requested to provide the number of contracted hours per week for each position funded. This data was analysed in relation to the categories of work and ranged from an



average of 18 hours per week for administration positions to an average of 35 hours a week for manager positions (see Figure 4.3).

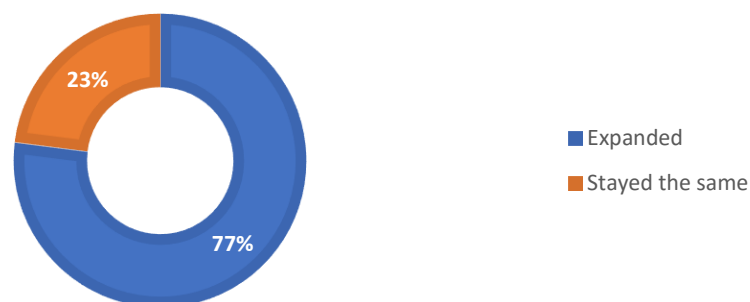
Figure 4.3: Average contracted hours per week by category of work



## 4.2 Level of activities/services provided

The Department designed the SSNO funding scheme with the aim of providing essential support to organisations to carry out their core activities. As part of the monitoring requirements, organisations were asked what impact the SSNO funding had in relation to **the level of activities** or services provided. As shown in Figure 4.4 below, during this reporting period, all of the SSNO funded organisations reported that the funding allowed them to either: a) Expand their activities (77%) or b) Maintain the same level of activity (23%). No organisations reported that the level of activity had reduced in the previous 12 months, compared to 1% of organisations who reported a reduction in activity in 2016/2017. There was also a slight increase in the number of organisations reporting an expansion of services from 75% to 77%.

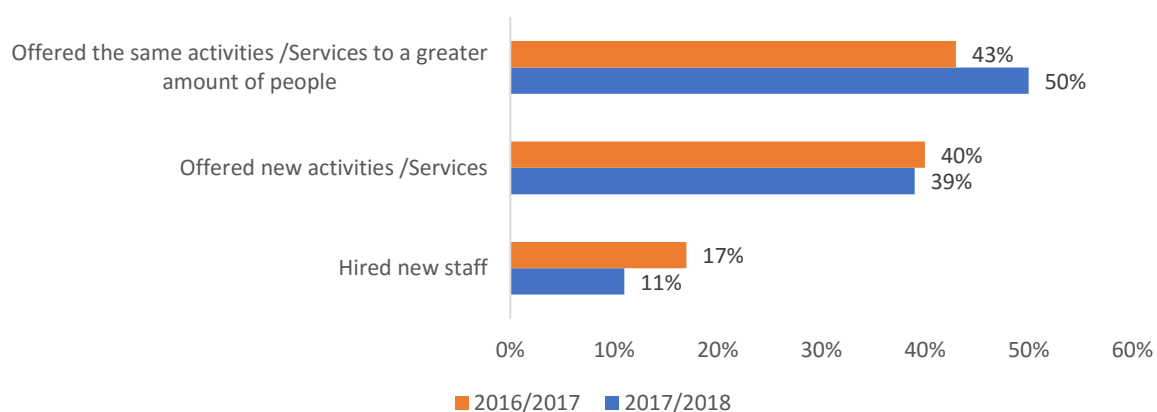
Figure 4.4: Level of service provision as a result of SSNO funding



Organisations were asked to provide further detail about the ways in which their services had expanded. The responses are displayed in Figure 4.5 below. Of those who reported an expansion of their level of activity during this period:

- Half of the organisations (50%) reported that they offered the same activities to a **greater number of people** (an increase of 7% compared to the previous reporting period);
- 39% of organisations reported that they offered **new services** to their target groups (a slight decrease of 1% from the previous period);
- 11% of organisations reported that the funding enabled them **to hire additional staff** (a reduction of 6% from the previous period). This decrease is likely due to the fact that the majority of SSNO funded staff members were in place at the beginning of the grant agreement and there were very few changes in this regard in this reporting period. Some organisations reported that the SSNO funding enabled them to access other funding streams which in turn allowed them to hire additional staff members. Many organisations also reported that the funding supported them to recruit volunteers to deliver services.

Figure 4.5: Expansion of services as a result of SSNO funding



The table below provides some examples of how services were expanded during this period, in relation to the three categories of expansion identified. Organisations described how the funding allowed them to pilot new initiatives, increase their number of service users and expand their number of staff and volunteers in order to meet the needs of their respective target groups.

Examples in practice – Expansion of services	
<b>New Activities/Services offered</b>	<i>“SSNO funding has enabled the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) to develop new initiatives and new partnerships. The DESSA work with Waterford Children and Young People’s Services Committee is unique and innovative. This entails supporting Waterford CYPSC (Children and Young People’s</i>

Services Committee) to identify and address the key issues impacting on children and young people who are disabled or who have complex health needs and to adopt as best practice a strategic approach to social inclusion enabling children and young people the opportunities to live ordinary lives.”

**Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA)**

“SSNO has allowed us to supervise and support two additional programmes. The Migrant Access Programme has offered seven employment training [sessions] to 72 participants and nine public information sessions to 133 participants. The English Homework Club provided support to five schools (175 pupils attended).”

**New Communities Partnership (NCP)**

**Increasing the number of service users/members**

“We have built and increased membership ensuring that it is representative of the aftercare sector nationally. Membership has increased significantly. We now have 239 members representing over 40 organisations.”

**Breaking Through (supporting the Irish Aftercare Network)**

“Membership grew from 76 members to 86 and participation in network meetings steadied at an average of 17. Our pilot Canal Communities Against Racism (CCAR) is now being run by its members and has grown in its functions and geographical reach.”

**European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland**

**Additional staff hired/ volunteers recruited**

“The funding for the Executive Director role has resulted in an increased capacity by allowing time to spend working on new strategic funding relationships. This has resulted in increased staff numbers, with seven new staff roles being added to the organisation.”

**Community Creations (Spun out)**

“Core investment through SSNO provided the stability needed to make strategic fundraising investments and hire a volunteer coordinator to implement a volunteer programme in our front-line services. Together these investments have expanded our capacity financially and improved the ratio of workers to young people within our services.”

**Belong to Youth Services**

“The total number of active volunteers in Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) has increased from 370 to 420 over the past twelve months. In Wexford hospital, we increased our volunteer numbers from 7 to 24 which has led to a much enhanced service for that hospital.”

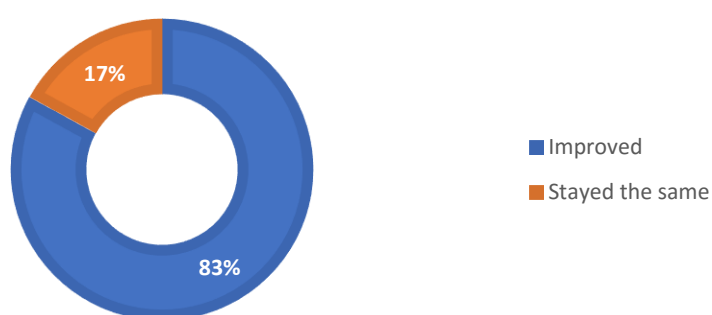
**Children in Hospital Ireland**

### 4.3 Quality of services

Organisations were asked if the **quality** of their service provision had improved in the last 12 months as a result of SSNO funding. Figure 4.6 displays the breakdown of responses.

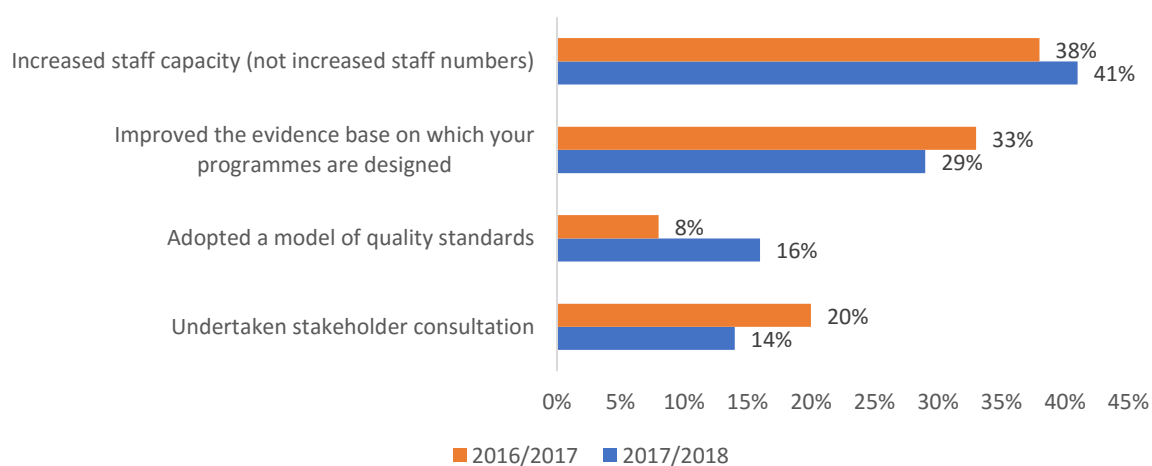
- 83% reported that the quality of service provision had improved (a slight reduction of 2% from the previous reporting period);
- 17% reported that the quality remained at the same level (increased by 2%).

Figure 4.6: Quality of service provision as a result of SSNO funding



Where organisations reported an improvement in the quality of services, they were asked to identify the **types** of improvements made. The ways in which the quality of services was improved through SSNO funding is displayed in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Types of improvement to quality of services



- **41%** of organisations reported that they had improved staff *capacity* as opposed to increased staff numbers. This included providing training and up-skilling staff members to

improve their capacity and skills in order to better support their target groups. Many organisations also described building capacity and providing supports to their volunteers who are often the frontline service providers for many SSNO funded organisations.

- **29%** reported that they improved the evidence base on which their programmes were designed. This took several forms including surveys of members and service users, face to face feedback, focus groups and commissioned pieces of research.
- **16%** of groups responded that they had adopted a model of quality standards for continuous improvement of their services. This percentage had doubled compared to the previous reporting period (8%).
- **14%** reported that they had undertaken stakeholder consultation. This figure decreased by almost a third from the previous reporting period.

It is important to note that organisations were asked to select one option from the above categories. This allows for the identification of which types of improvements were concentrated on, however, many organisations reported making improvements across these four categories as a result of SSNO funding. The following table provides examples of ways in which organisations were able to improve the quality of their services as a result of the funding in the last 12 months.

#### Examples in practice – Improvements to the quality of services

##### **Improving staff and volunteer capacity**

*“As a result of SSNO funding, we have been in a position to identify and provide training to our staff in many areas. This has led to an increase in staff capacity, knowledge and service delivery evaluation. Various training workshops were provided, including: GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) workshops with both staff and board members; and outcome and impact measurement training for staff members.”*

**Disability Federation of Ireland**

##### **Improving evidence based research**

*“Irish Rural Link (IRL) have evaluated the services we provide via participant surveys. Following up on the survey results we made recommendations to the governing department, who in turn made positive changes to the programme. IRL expanded the service to include more areas of digital learning as indicated in the survey results. We now implement an evaluation of services/projects/events on every occasion, and implement any changes highlighted.”*

**Irish Rural Link**

*“The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) was able to carry out the first ever patient experience survey of people accessing neurology services. This enables*

NAI advocacy and awareness initiatives in this area to have a strong evidence base going forward.”

**The Neurological Alliance of Ireland**

**Adopting a model of quality standards**

“We have adopted the Trusted Charity Quality Assurance System (formerly known as the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations - PQASSO) which has focused us on embedding a culture of continuous quality improvement...We have carried out an in-depth evidence based self-assessment and developed a quality improvement plan. This has resulted in quality improvements across all areas of our work, with specific focus on: governance, planning, leadership and management, user-centred service, managing people, money and resources, learning and development, external communications, working with others and assessing outcomes and impacts.”

**Volunteer Ireland**

“We have established a set of shared standards on GDPR, custom made for the rape crisis sector. For example our data consent standard and protocol takes into consideration the particularly sensitive nature of the data subject, the potential effects of trauma, the circumstances of their seeking services from a Rape Crisis Centre and the need for innovation to ensure and be able to demonstrate fully informed consent, thus developing a protocol of information giving and continuous consent that meets clinical and legal considerations and centres on the needs and rights of the survivor.”

**Rape Crisis Network Ireland**

**Stakeholder consultation**

“Surveys [were] carried out in summer 2017 and spring 2018. These surveys helped us to identify training needs as well as the most effective ways of communicating with our target groups. They also demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with our training as well as its positive impact. An important feature of our surveys is the wide range of respondents, from small community groups to key personnel in national networks and statutory agencies. This allows us to use the views of all our stakeholders in the development of our supports.”

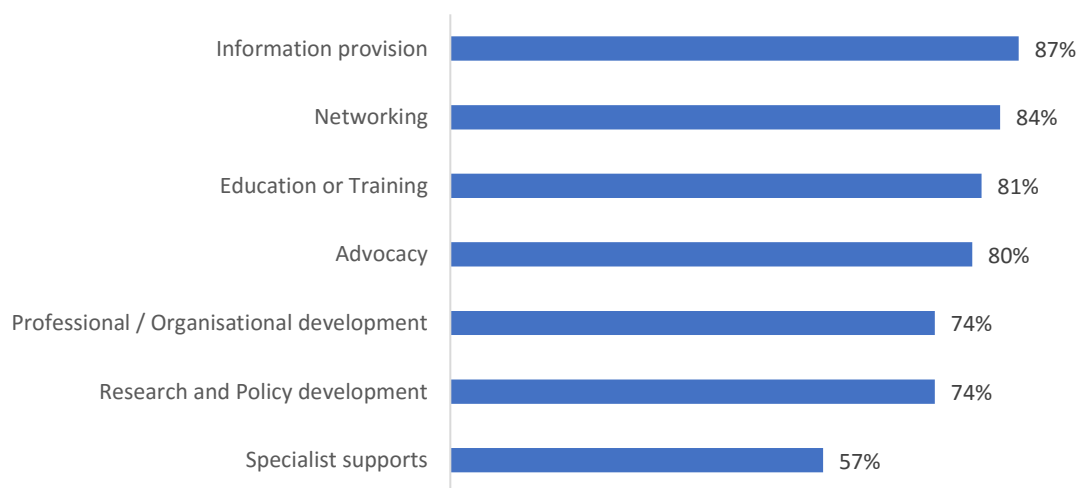
**Carmichael Centre For Voluntary Groups**

## 4.4 Achievements and key areas of SSNO funded activity

Organisations were asked to provide examples of specific achievements and improvements to services they had made in the past 12 months that **would not have been possible without SSNO funding**. This included new activities, improvements made to existing services, or extensions to programmes that would otherwise not have been able to continue.

Seven key areas of SSNO funded activities were identified and Figure 0.1 below shows the level of activity in relation to each category as reported for this period. As shown, 87% of organisations (61) reported that the SSNO funding contributed towards information provision, followed closely by 84% of organisations (59) who reported that the funding contributed to networking activities. 81% (57) reported the delivery of education or training initiatives as a result of the funding. Four in five organisations reported engagement in advocacy related activities (56). Professional or organisational development and research and policy development were both reported by 74% of organisations (52 each). A slightly lower proportion of organisations reported that the SSNO funding contributed towards the delivery of specialist supports to their target groups (57% or 40 organisations).

Figure 0.1: Areas of activity contributed to by SSNO funding



Further details and examples of the work under each category are detailed in the following sections.

### Information provision

**87%** of organisations reported information provision as a key area of their SSNO funded activities. This was the most commonly selected activity by organisations. Examples of information provision

ranged from one-to-one supports and advice to individual members such as information helplines, websites and portals, to events and conferences to provide information to the target group, service providers or other organisations within the relevant field.

Information provision was seen as an essential part of their service by many organisations as it also served as a way to engage new clients, develop relationships with communities and to raise and maintain awareness of the organisation and their work. Some examples of information provision in practice are provided below.

#### Examples in practice - information provision

*“SpunOut has produced 351 new information resources, which has been enabled by the part-funding of the editorial function...There has been a 73% increase in demand for information from SpunOut.ie, with our readership growing from 19,000 people per week (25,000 visits) to over 33,000 people (45,000 visits) per week. In the last 12 months, the number of sessions has increased by 33%. SSNO funding has indeed been crucial to the increased capacity needed to respond to the continued increase in demand for information.”*

##### **Community Creations (SpunOut)**

*“The SSNO funded staff have provided essential support to the network of local older peoples associations through information, guidance and support. This enables the local groups to plan and deliver a range of activities that help older people remain connected and part of their community.”*

##### **Active Retirement Network Ireland**

*“Over the past 12 months, we continued to engage with and provide information and awareness materials on domestic violence to a wide range of community and voluntary groups. These groups include family resource centres, community development projects, local domestic and sexual violence organisations, local development companies, women’s groups and youth groups. This activity included the distribution of reports, leaflets, posters and campaign specific materials. We also continue to provide information via our e-zines, on our main website and engage on our social media platforms. This work is an essential way to reaching women experiencing abuse in their local areas and online by encouraging awareness events, campaigns, and having the issues and our 24hr Helpline visible in community spaces.”*

##### **Women’s Aid**

*“In recent years, the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) had a particular focus on issues affecting migrant children and, with the support of our SSNO grant, in January 2018, we launched an information guide for young migrants regarding immigration residence and registration obligations imposed at the age of 16 years. The guide has since been disseminated nationally to relevant organisations and groups.”*

##### **Immigrant Council of Ireland**



## Networking/Collaborative approaches

Networking activities formed a significant area of SSNO funded work, as reported by **84%** of organisations, and this included engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, from member organisations to policy makers to establish stronger relationships and develop collaborative approaches. Organisations worked towards establishing closer ties with national, regional and local stakeholders by setting up conferences and workshops, liaising with representatives of both the public and private sector to share information and link up around matters of importance to their field. Many organisations had a role on advisory committees and working groups, bringing a multi-agency approach to issues of national importance. Examples provided by organisations also included supporting their own members to network with each other by providing opportunities in the form of events and forums. A range of practical examples of partnerships formed and collaborations engaged in by organisations, are provided below.

### Examples in practice – networking activities/collaborative approaches

*“We work on an interagency basis with other organisations in a number of capacities, including:*

- *The Monitoring Committee of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV) and the Advisory Group for the National Awareness Campaign for DSGBV*
- *The Cosc Data Working group*
- *RCNI convenes the Charities Data Protection Working Group and the Vulnerable Witnesses Interagency Group which has produced the final report <https://www.rcni.ie/wp-content/uploads/210807-Rape-Crisis-Network-Ireland-Hearing-Every-Voice-Report-3.pdf>*
- *Members of the ‘changing media culture’ interagency group*
- *Engagement and input into SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems) policy on women and alcohol resulting in this report: <http://www.shaap.org.uk/images/women-and-alcohol-web.pdf>*
- *Co-lead the ‘Retrospective reporting multiagency initiative’ alongside One in Four which brings together statutory and non-statutory multiagency actors to resolve matters arising with mandatory and retrospective reporting of child sexual abuse, collaboration includes DCYA, Tusla, NGOs, Social Workers, academics and An Garda Síochána.”*

#### **Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)**

*“MDN’s National Men’s Health Programme (NMHP) was a partner for a piece of research for the purpose of ‘Building Community Capacity to improve the Mental Health and Well-Being of Middle Aged Men in the Republic of Ireland’. This is a piece of work in partnership with The Men’s Health Forum in Ireland, The National Centre for Men’s Health and Irish Research Council. The results were launched earlier in the year. The NMHP took on the role of recording over 18 video interviews at the event for promotion use and as a support for resource development for training in the future. The work continues, strengthened*

*through cooperative partnership based practice and continues to focus on incremental awareness raising and capacity building in relation to men's health and wellbeing."*

#### **Men's Development Network (MDN)**

*"SSNO funding has allowed Family Carers Ireland (FCI) to continue to build and support our group based organisation providing a highly effective and cohesive nationwide network of family carers. It has allowed family carers to engage with FCI locally through their groups, regionally through regional forums and nationally through our National Carers Conventions."*

#### **Family Carers Ireland**

*"SSNO funding provided the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) with the staffing required to... undertake significant stakeholder and civic society collaboration. This led directly to NWCI being able to work with newer members such as Women in Sport and Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) organisations as they highlight gender inequality in their sectors; support their advocacy for equitable state funding; and work with relevant state agencies, i.e. SOLAS as they work to address issues such as girls and women's participation in apprenticeships."*

#### **National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI)**

"Some examples of interagency collaborations engaged in by the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA):

- *Participation in the HSE Transforming Lives Working Group 3 and completion and submission of the document Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places: Plan for Effective Participation in Decision Making to the HSE.*
- *Organisation and delivery of the seminar From Service Land to Community Participation in partnership with Bluebell CDP, Dublin 12, in December 2017. Over 80 people participated in this seminar.*
- *Information talks to parents in Dublin and Kildare through HSE Services, Dublin South City Partnership and Kildare Library Services*
- *Delivery of six Empowering Parents Programmes in Kerry and Dublin to 60 parents. This included the completion of Empowering Parents training in partnership with Grangegorman ABC Project."*

#### **Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA)**

## **Education and training**

**81%** of organisations reported carrying out education or training related activities, including co-ordinating, delivering or collaborating on the provision of training events, workshops or education programmes for target groups, staff, volunteers and other stakeholders. The scale of the training offered differed across organisations, ranging from national and regional events to local workshops.

Some examples of educational and training activities reported in this period are provided below.

#### Examples in practice - education/training activities

*“We delivered 166 training events (scheduled and customised) to a record number of 2,210 people from 398 groups. We developed five webinars in collaboration with CPA (Certified Public Accountants) and have agreed to develop three webinars in collaboration with Volunteer Ireland. Webinars are an ideal opportunity for people and organisations, regardless of their locations, to access practical supports from Carmichael. We delivered two new scheduled training programmes and developed new scheduled courses and seminars, e.g. Introduction to Book-keeping, Challenges for Trustees in a New Regulatory Age. We also added three new courses to our eLearning suite including GDPR and The Role of the Company Secretary.”*

#### **Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups**

*“[SSNO funding supported the delivery of] our Green Youth Employment programme, delivering QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) accredited employment training and work experience to 75 at risk or marginalised young people who have been long-term unemployed, many not in education, training or employment; and the delivery of our Learning to Change programme, which impacted 1,150 young people in 2017-2018, an increase from 600 the previous year and a record number for this programme.”*

#### **The Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth – Unesco Clubs (ECO-UNESCO)**

### Advocacy

80% of organisations reported advocacy related activities on behalf of their respective field or target group. Many organisations provided advocacy and support services for individuals, for example people with disabilities, while others engaged in lobbying for legislative reform and representations to government departments on issues pertinent to their target group or field.

#### Examples in practice - advocacy

*“Lead on advocating for income maximisation and adequacy for lone parents through highlighting poverty, income limits and social welfare issues for one-parent families; Representations to government regarding the Affordable Childcare Scheme including submissions and representing one-parent families on two consultative groups convened by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs; Present to relevant Oireachtas Committee to improve access to education, employment, family law and in-work supports.”*

#### **Cherish**

*“Our annual Report Card makes recommendations to ensure promises to children in the Programme for Government are delivered and we carry out dedicated awareness programme around findings & recommendations. Our members are central to this entire process as our consultation with them feeds directly into those recommendations and gives us a mandate to advocate on a range of issues affecting children.”*

#### **Children’s Rights Alliance**

*“Individual advocacy support to 17 individuals including parents of children and young people and adults using disability services. This entailed advocacy in relation to access to mainstream education, challenging delays in the Assessment of Need process, lack of therapeutic services and lack of compliance with Government disability policy for adult day services and decongregation.”*

**Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA)**

### **Professional / organisational development**

74% of organisations reported that they engaged in organisational or professional development activities. These included staff, board member and volunteer upskilling and working to improve the organisation’s level of compliance, governance and strategic planning. Organisations reported working to develop their capacity to meet a wide variety of requirements, including the often highly complex and sensitive needs of their members. Of particular significance in this reporting period was the introduction of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and the impact that this had on organisations in order to meet their legal obligations. Many commented on the significant workload involved and the challenge of trying to meet requirements within existing resources without this having a negative impact on service provision for their members or stakeholders. Some examples of the work undertaken to improve organisational and staff development are provided below.

#### **Examples in practice – professional and organisational development**

*“The support from the SSNO has enabled the organisation to continue to comply with key governance requirements particularly in relation to the maintenance of the National Executive Committee (Board of Directors) and the Officers Board. The Board Members’ Handbook that was developed with the support of the SSNO continues to be an important resource for Board Members. The Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of the organisation’s governance and operational structures and processes. The organisation has also commenced the journey to adopting the Governance Code and the SSNO support for this process has been vital.”*

**INOUE (Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed)**

*“The CEO was in a position to drive the MOVE Ireland Strategic Plan, as a result of this drive we attained funding for two part time co-ordinators from Cosc (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence) increasing our work force, which has enabled a strengthened management structure to be put in place.*

*A comprehensive review of our data protection, policies and procedures was undertaken to ensure that we are GDPR compliant. This work involved: Updated client consent forms; Enhanced IT security measures; Audit of files; Assessment of risk in relation to storage of files; A review of the file recording system; A complete update of policies and procedures for staff, trustees and facilitators.”*

**MOVE Ireland (Men overcoming violence)**

*“With the introduction of the Children First legislation our Regional Development Officers have been tasked with ensuring that clubs have the appropriate protection and reporting measures in place to keep athletes safe while participating in Special Olympics activities.”*

**Special Olympics Ireland**

## **Research and policy development**

74% of organisations reported engaging in research and/or producing policy submissions to various government departments and agencies on issues such as children in homelessness, mental health and supports for older people. Some organisations reported that they engaged directly in research while others contracted an external consultant to undertake research in their field or sector. Many organisations described consultation with their members or target groups in order to inform their research and policy submissions. Improving the evidence base of the work was a key area of activity for many organisations during this period.

### **Examples in practice - research and policy development**

*“Funding under this programme enables Mental Health Reform (MHR) to continue to operate as a national umbrella organisation, providing coordinated policy advice to Government departments and public bodies. Funding has allowed us to continue our policy development and research activities. SSNO funding also allowed MHR to highlight the needs of people with mental health difficulties living in the community. We published an evidenced-based research report on advocacy needs of people with mental health difficulties. SSNO funding allowed MHR to coordinate the views of our members and communicate these to various policy forums.”*

**Mental Health Reform**

*“Of special note this year, we commissioned research on the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness. The impetus for this came from our members group on homelessness made up of approximately 20 organisations working on the ground including Simon Communities, Peter McVerry Trust and Focus Ireland. The group told us about the severe educational impacts facing children in homelessness and emergency accommodation. The research allowed us to respond to the needs and recommendations identified by members. It was conducted by DCU Institute of Education and launched in July 2018 securing a high level of media coverage.”*

**Children’s Rights Alliance**

*“The policy making process has improved significantly as a result of the provision of funding. The funding of SSNO positions within the organisation allowed us to respond to both developments in the sector, and government consultations, in a coherent and comprehensive manner. Threshold’s pre-budget submission was drafted in July and August 2017 and would not have been drafted as cohesively or comprehensively without the services of a dedicated policy team.”*

**Threshold**

## Specialist supports

57% of SSNO funded organisations reported either continuing existing supports and services or developing new supports specific to their target group or field. This included a range of highly specialised supports to people with specific needs, legal advice, establishment of equality based schools, and tailored training and support programmes for frontline staff at community and voluntary organisations. Many of the supports provided require staff to have specialist knowledge and understanding of highly complex issues such as immigration, housing policy, child development and palliative care. Examples of supports requiring specialist knowledge and skills are provided here.

### Examples in practice – specialist supports

The National Youth Council of Ireland engaged in a number of projects requiring specialist skills, including:

- *Transforming Conflict project: an exchange project with Lebanon exploring how to transform conflict for young people (co-funded by the Anna Lindh Foundation);*
- *Outside In project: training a team of five youth workers to train fellow youth workers how to identify, manage and transform hateful behaviours in youth settings (Erasmus+);*
- *Making Links project: upskilling 30 minority ethnic led youth group leaders and linking them with the mainstream youth work sector; mapping and linking youth work with resettled Syrian refugees; mapping and linking youth work opportunities for young asylum seekers in Direct Provision centres (co-funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission).*

#### **National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)**

*“With the SSNO funding, the Immigrant Council of Ireland has been enabled to continue frontline service provision to migrants and their family members, including Irish citizens, across the broad spectrum of migration and international protection systems. Our services include provision of an Information & Referral Helpline for the public and also the staff and volunteers of the national network of Citizens Information Centres. It also includes face-to-face appointments for service users, in particular those who are vulnerable, such as victims of domestic violence and migrant children in care, and who require more assistance and support in making immigration-related applications.”*

#### **Immigrant Council of Ireland**

*“Hospice Friendly Hospitals - This programme has transformed culture and practice concerning end of life in hospitals and is becoming stronger every year. We continue to provide expert advice, guidance and resources to staff working in hospitals through our support hub as well as organising three acute hospital network meetings across the country. On average, over 20 hospitals are represented at each meeting. The HSE/HSF oversight group are launching a booklet 'What to expect when someone is dying' which will be available for public consumption across hospitals (booklet can be found [HERE](#)). The group has also formally reviewed our 'Final Journey Training Package' for all hospital staff.”*

#### **The Irish Hospice Foundation**

## 5. Challenges and learning

SSNO funded organisations outlined the main challenges and key learnings for their organisation in relation to the core funded activities over the previous 12 month period. The challenges reported were broadly in line with those experienced in the previous reporting period, many of which were sector specific challenges. Some new challenges emerged during this period including the introduction of GDPR and other regulatory requirements which required significant resources to ensure that organisations were compliant. Other topical issues such as rising levels of homelessness, immigration and direct provision and the implications of Brexit, all continued to pose major challenges for organisations working on the frontline providing supports to the people affected by these issues. Many organisations experienced internal organisational level issues during this period, such as staff turnover and recruitment delays, which impacted on their ability to meet their planned objectives for the period. The main challenges experienced in this reporting period are presented here in relation to:

- a) The external operating environment and specific sector challenges and;
- b) Internal/organisational level challenges.

Key learning during this period has also been identified and SSNO funded organisations have continued to demonstrate creative and innovative approaches to overcoming the barriers and challenges faced within their respective fields, including accessing new funding streams, collaborative approaches and streamlining their processes to operate more efficiently and strengthen their sustainability.

### 5.1 Challenges

#### *A. External environment*

Challenges posed due to the changing external environment in which SSNO funded organisations are operating which have impacted on their ability to carry out their work, are described here.

One of the major challenges faced within this reporting period, was meeting increased **regulatory compliance and legislative obligations**. While this emerged as a key challenge in the previous reporting period, the introduction of **GDPR** legislation during this period had a significant impact on organisations in terms of meeting their obligations while ensuring that normal service provision was maintained for members and target groups, all within existing resources. This put a strain on many organisations, particularly smaller organisations with a smaller pool of staff to carry out these duties. Other areas of compliance regulation included the introduction of the Charities Regulator

Governance Code and child protection legislation (Children First). As no additional funding was made available to support charities and not for profit organisations to comply with these regulations, many organisations described the SSNO funding as key to ensuring compliance in a rapidly changing regulatory landscape.

*“The main challenges to optimising the SSNO funding are successfully allocating the service provision in line with the increased requirement for compliance e.g. data protection/GDPR, governance codes, Charity Regulatory Act and incoming legislation, SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice) financial regulations, health and safety & employment law, funder/donor conditions & requirements” (Chronic Pain Ireland)*

Many organisations referred to the challenges of working with **reduced funding and limited resources** and the impact this has in terms of service delivery and also planning for the future of the organisation. Securing sources of income forms a significant part of the work for many non-profit organisations and many commented that the SSNO funding was essential in allowing them to free up some staff availability to pursue grant opportunities and fundraising activities thus creating a more sustainable and stable future for the organisation and the services they provide to their target groups. Several organisations also described the challenges of engaging in strategic planning for the organisation due to lack of stability /future funding streams identified.

*“We have continued to innovate and expand our fundraising activities and commercial training delivery, but the unpredictable nature of this income stream in its early stages makes planning strategically quite problematic.” (The Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth – Unesco Clubs (ECO-UNESCO))*

Related to funding and the lack of resources experienced by many organisations, SSNO funded organisations described the challenges of **meeting the level of demand for their services** during this period, including support services to members, vulnerable individuals and wider ‘sector’ supports such as policy submissions and consultations.

*“The main challenge has been the demand on policy advocacy. As we produce more submissions the ask becomes greater to submit into additional processes. Some of these consultative processes have been very short on notice which can pose an issue about getting the voice of people with a disability and their family supporters heard in our submissions.” (Inclusion Ireland)*

*“On our telephone information and referral line we have been receiving ever longer and more complicated calls. The data collected in relation to the queries on the information line and the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) Clinics demonstrated an increase in the area of employment law of 23% on the information line and 10% for the advice clinics at the end of December 2017.” (Free Legal Advice Centres)*

Other organisations commented on challenges associated with **engaging with more isolated and hard to reach communities**, and the resource intensive nature of this type of work.



*“Because we work specifically and directly with men who are the least likely to engage with support services or who may be referred to The Men’s Development Network (MDN) by main stream services who have not been able to meet their needs, the number of men attending MDN services and their capacity to stay engaged continues to be a significant challenge.” (The Men’s Development Network)*

*“An emerging challenge has arisen in a few geographical areas where numbers of minority ethnic youth are high and no adequate or relevant youth work provision has been in place. The necessary relationships of trust have not been developed and in some cases minority ethnic communities have felt let down.” (National Youth Council of Ireland)*

The challenges of engaging with target groups that occur specifically in the rural environment were highlighted, such as the lack of referrals and lack of available transport contributing to the challenges of engaging with more isolated communities. Some organisations have implemented measures such as funding towards transport costs to address these challenges.

**Working collaboratively with other organisations** and agencies was identified as a key area of work for most SSNO organisations during this period, however, many reported challenges in this regard. Networking and joined up approaches, while considered very worthwhile and necessary, must also be recognised as time consuming and resource intensive work which can lead to delays on projects and meeting goals.

*“It can be a challenge working with other organisations, particularly when the project is your priority and not theirs. Delays in meeting objectives can be frustrating and inevitable.” (National Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Ireland)*

*“For the role of CEO in a small staffed organisation, there is always a challenge of balancing the needs of developing and implementing the service on the ground while also making time to promote the organisation, network and build collaborations - all of which will help to build the sustainability of the organisation and attract further funding. This is something that we worked very hard at to ensure that equal time is spent on both aspects of the work.” (Children in Hospital Ireland)*

Finally, in terms of external challenges, broader issues taking place at an international level including Brexit and the rise in anti-immigration sentiment across Europe and the US during this period have presented challenges for some SSNO funded organisations. For example, the impact of Brexit was far more time consuming than expected for some organisations.

*“There was ongoing work in relation to Brexit, a development that poses serious human rights issues and great uncertainty for children on the island of Ireland. We commissioned A&L Goodbody to research Brexit’s impact identifying child protection, family law, common travel, childcare law and child poverty issues...While our work on Brexit has been impactful, a new issue emerging like this has a big impact on business planning and staff work load.” (Children’s Rights Alliance)*

## **B. Internal/organisational level**

A number of key challenges at an organisational level were reported by organisations in relation to staffing turnover and capacity, reliance on volunteers to sustain services, and the challenges of strategic planning in the absence of secure funding sources.

**Staffing and recruitment issues** were raised as a challenge by a high proportion of SSNO funded organisations during this reporting period. Many organisations experienced staff turnover during the period for a variety of reasons, including retirement, maternity leave, sick leave, carers leave etc. This often resulted in pressure for the organisation in allowing for settling in time for new staff and delays in recruitment processes while trying to maintain existing levels of services and ensure that service users and target groups were not negatively impacted. Upskilling and training needs for staff were also identified as an ongoing challenge for organisations, as the operating environment can change rapidly and front-line staff need to be aware and knowledgeable about the relevant sector to be able to provide appropriate supports to their members.

*“As the organisation works in the area of migration, a dynamic issue subject to frequent legal and administrative/policy changes, it is essential that we invest in ongoing support and internal training for our staff to ensure that they comply with CPD (Continuing Professional Development) requirements and are confident to provide accurate information/advice to service users.” (Immigrant Council of Ireland)*

Many organisations also highlighted the **heavy reliance on volunteers** across organisations in the not for profit sector and some of the challenges linked to this, including the support needs of volunteers and the work involved in maintaining volunteer numbers to be able to carry out their activities. In addition, the support needs and **responsibilities of voluntary boards** were highlighted, particularly in the context of increased regulatory requirements.

*“Schemes like the SSNO are vital for organisations like the Irish Stammering Association which depend heavily on unpaid voluntary work by board members and other volunteers who help at and/or facilitate events. It allows for the employment of the small number of part-time staff who support the Board and ensure that services are delivered to the stammering community in Ireland, where the individual impact can be significant.” (Irish Stammering Association)*

*“There is an increasing demand on the charity sector to ensure they are operating with the highest standards of governance and compliance... the volunteer network needs constant communication, development and training to ensure we bring the network of volunteers on board with the new regulations.” (The Multiple Sclerosis Society)*

Finally, in terms of challenges faced at organisational level, many organisations reported the challenges experienced in the context of compliance in relation to their own internal processes and systems. While many organisations were endeavouring to improve their data collection and ICT

systems, there was a body of work and challenges associated with this, including staff training needs and varying degrees of ICT capacity.

*“The implementation of Salesforce has resulted in many challenges for the organisation, most notably the need for staff training and the importance of including all staff in the process to ensure that the project is successful. The Monitoring and Evaluation Co-ordinator has been providing support to over 30 GROW staff, all of whom have different IT competencies and require differing levels of guidance and support.” (GROW Ireland)*

## 5.2 Learning

SSNO funded organisations described the learning for their organisation during this period. In line with the previous reporting period, key areas of learning included the importance of working collaboratively with government departments and agencies, improving internal structures and processes, and the benefits of strategic planning for the future sustainability of the organisations. In addition to these, some emerging areas of learning in this reporting period included the importance of feedback and consultation with members and target groups to improve service provision, an increased focus on the impact of the organisation’s activities and data to support this, the importance of investing in staff and volunteers to enable them to provide valuable services as well as additional training requirements as a result of the increased regulatory requirements such as GDPR. Training needs in relation to specific sector issues, such as disability, migrant issues and housing legislation, were also identified as vital to ensure appropriate supports are delivered to the people who require them.

### Working collaboratively

Many organisations reported on the benefits of establishing strong links and working collaboratively with relevant government departments and other agencies and service providers. Working in partnership was described as a key way to share resources and knowledge and to ensure that target groups are receiving the necessary supports.

*“Partnerships can yield significant benefits. In mid-2017 we began a partnership with Pieta House to deliver an in-house counselling service together from within BeLonG To for the most at risk LGBTI+ young people we support. This service has proved invaluable in supporting our most vulnerable service users.” (Belong to Youth Services)*

In addition, collaborations with government departments were seen as an essential method for ensuring that the needs of the target groups were kept on the agenda and that their voices were represented at policy and decision making level.

*“Another key learning is that fostering and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, in particular state agencies, is necessary to ensure positive systemic changes for our service users. In this regard we*

*have engaged with our civil society colleagues in constructive dialogue with the INIS (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service) to achieve positive developments, such as the introduction of the International Humanitarian Access Scheme and forthcoming Community Sponsorship Scheme.” (Immigrant Council of Ireland)*

*“The issues people present with through their engagement with The Men’s Development Network (MDN) can be complex and immensely challenging and therefore may need a multi-agency approach. Therefore MDN’s relationship with government departments and other services providers is extremely important.” (The Men’s Development Network)*

Organisations reported working with a range of partners including government departments, local authorities, PPNs (Public Participation Networks), HSE, NGOs and other service providers to maximise positive outcomes for the people and organisations they support. While this type of work was not without challenges, it was seen as hugely beneficial and worth the time and resources invested in it.

### **Strategic planning**

The importance of strategic and long term planning was highlighted by a number of organisations during this period. This was also recognised as a challenging area for groups given the lack of long term funding sources available to support their activities. Many commented that the SSNO funding was fundamental in allowing the organisation the capacity to engage in strategic planning.

*“Arthritis Ireland was working without a clear strategy for over a year. The development of a new strategy has improved our effectiveness and efficiency through setting strategic priorities and future direction. This core piece of work has brought the board, staff and volunteers together so that we are on the same page as we move forwards.” (Arthritis Ireland)*

### **Organisational development**

In addition to strategic planning, organisations reported a variety of ways in which they had improved their internal systems and processes during this period, including the development of ICT systems, such as CRM (Customer Relationship Management). There was a significant focus on governance and compliance in this period. This meant that organisations had to invest substantial resources in reviewing their own systems and procedures in order to ensure compliance. There was much learning from this process and many organisations used this review as an opportunity to improve their internal processes. The learning and development needs for staff, board members and volunteers arising from this work were also identified.

Due to the training needs as a result of the introduction of new legislation, organisations explored different methods of training delivery that can be more efficient for the organisation and staff, for example, Barnardos rolled out Tusla’s “Introduction to Children First” on-line training to 280

frontline staff and support staff who have roles that involve working in a service or interacting with the general public.

*“The process of supporting staff to take part in online training was very useful in terms of learning. [It] allowed the training team to learn, how best to support and encourage staff to access online training. Given the success in terms of number of staff completing online training, it may be possible to use online training for staff training in the future. We are currently exploring the possibility of providing data protection training online.” (Barnardos – Republic of Ireland)*

### **Improving the evidence base for services**

An emerging area of learning in this period was the benefit of using data and evidence to show the impact of services provided. This took many forms across organisations from consultations and feedback with service users to commissioned pieces of research in a sector to inform policy.

*“There has been a persistent effort to better explain the impact of our work through better analytics and a strong commitment to generating feedback from service users and healthcare professionals.” (Asthma Society of Ireland)*

*“The year has shown the critical importance of up-to-date analysis that can support and inform policy development and frontline advocacy that responds to the changing nature of homelessness. The capacity to bridge analysis and frontline services has contributed to the increased capacity of Focus Ireland to prevent homelessness.” (Focus Ireland)*

### **Investing in staff and volunteers**

Many organisations reported in this period that their key learning was how essential it is to invest in staff and volunteers to ensure the smooth running of the organisation and service delivery. Many of the organisations are providing frontline services in a complex and rapidly evolving legal landscape, such as housing and migration.

It was also highlighted that this learning and knowledge additionally needs to be delivered to staff in public bodies and community based organisations to ensure better outcomes and experiences for the vulnerable and/or marginalised groups they support.

*“The value of supporting other State and voluntary bodies to understand and address the needs of people with neurological conditions. This is an increasing demand facing the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) but it is essential that this demand continues to be met in order to address social exclusion and promote equality for people with neurological conditions across Irish society.” (Neurological Alliance of Ireland)*

Finally, in terms of the learning emerging from this reporting period, many organisations highlighted the over-reliance on volunteers in the not-for-profit sector and the need to invest resources in supporting volunteers and recognise their vital contribution to communities across the country.

Volunteer Ireland provided the following comment which captures the extent and importance of voluntary activity to Irish society.

*“There is a growing need for support among volunteer involving organisations across the country. The level of informal volunteering that is taking place in all communities, rural and urban, is very significant and linked to every aspect of Irish life. Formal volunteering is only a small portion of the overall contribution of volunteers. There is more support needed nationally and locally for volunteer involving organisations to enhance their services and highlight the important work they carry out...and the need to maintain and increase the engagement of individuals and organisations in voluntary activity.” (Volunteer Ireland)*

## 6. Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the second year of implementation of the current round of SSNO funding, which runs from 2016-2019. The report is based on the annual monitoring reports completed by SSNO funded organisations, covering the period from July 2017 to June 2018. During this period, a total of 71 organisations received SSNO funding towards their core costs, i.e. salary costs and overhead costs rather than specific project costs.

SSNO funded organisations reported a wide range of activities carried out during this reporting period, supported by the funding. The majority of SSNO funding is used to support core staff positions across a range of functions, from senior management to administrative and support positions. Organisations described the funding towards their core costs as essential to allowing them to maintain and develop their services. Many organisations also reported improving the quality of their services and supports to target groups as a result of the funding. It is evident from the monitoring reports, that many SSNO funded organisations are tackling significant issues, with increasing demands for their services in a time of limited resources. Organisations have outlined numerous challenges which they faced in this reporting period, including the introduction of increased legislative and compliance regulations such as GDPR and Children First. SSNO funding has been instrumental for many organisations during this period, enabling organisations to ensure they are meeting their regulatory and legal obligations.

Despite the limited resources available, SSNO funded organisations have continued to demonstrate their capacity to adapt, learn and innovate during this period. Organisations have worked hard to develop relationships and partnerships with government departments, agencies and other community and voluntary organisations to represent and improve the outcomes for their respective target groups. They have focused on improving their internal processes and ways of working to become more efficient. The SSNO funding has provided the space and resources for many organisations to engage in longer term strategic planning and accessing other funding streams in order to maintain and safeguard the future of their services. Organisations have also used the funding to invest in upskilling staff and volunteers to ensure the services they provide are meeting the needs of people and communities experiencing disadvantage across the country.

The next year of SSNO funding will be the last under the current programme. Planning for the next round of the SSNO is currently underway and organisations will be invited to information sessions in early 2019 to clarify the next steps in the application process for the new scheme. The next round of SSNO will build on the strengths of the current funding period, taking on board the learning from the current scheme so that national organisations in the community and voluntary sector can continue to provide essential services to address poverty and social exclusion, and promote a more equal society.

## Appendix I - SSNO funded organisations 2017-2018

Organisation name	Funding Amount
Immigrant Council of Ireland Ltd.	€250,358
Migrant information Centre Ltd.	€267,926
Cherish Limited	€270,000
Asthma Society of Ireland	€208,028
Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups Ltd.	€266,126
Focus Ireland Ltd	€174,358
Barnardos - Republic of Ireland Ltd.	€261,818
Threshold Ltd.	€251,799
Community Creations Ltd.	€172,500
The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland	€270,000
Special Olympics Ireland	€270,000
Active Retirement Network Ireland	€262,951
Care Alliance Ireland	€253,036
Spinal Injuries Ireland	€265,800
New Communities Partnership (NCP) Ltd.	€194,186
Volunteering Ireland Ltd.	€210,354
Free Legal Advice Centres Ltd.	€270,000
Belong to Youth Services	€269,990
Co-operative Housing Ireland Society Ltd.	€219,426
Irish Environmental Conservation Organisation for Youth-Unesco Clubs	€210,894
National Youth Council of Ireland	€253,122
Age Action Ireland Ltd.	€216,265
Educate Together	€268,994
Children in Hospital Ireland	€269,952
Children's Rights Alliance-Republic of Ireland	€269,844
Community Action Network Ltd.	€266,224
Community Workers Ltd.	€269,648
Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency Ltd.	€270,000
Down Syndrome Ireland	€260,124
European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland Ltd.	€260,503
European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland	€225,780
GLEN Limited*	€94,933
Inclusion Ireland – National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability	€270,000
Social Analysis and Action for Justice Ireland Ltd.	€269,870
Irish Council for Social Housing	€84,445
Irish Foster Care Association Ltd.	€166,213
I.N.O.U. Company Limited By Guarantee	€268,500
Irish Refugee Council Ltd	€268,752
Irish Rural Link Co-op Society Ltd.	€267,058
Medical Research Charities Ltd.	€242,344
The Men's Development Network Ltd	€264,784



Organisation name	Funding Amount
Mental Health Reform	€269,085
National Womens Council of Ireland	€270,000
Rape Crisis Network Ireland Ltd.	€269,960
Rotha Teoranta	€269,768
Women's Aid Limited	€239,584
Simon Community of Ireland	€269,602
Parents Plus Limited	€179,609
Dyslexia Association of Ireland	€204,970
Family Carers Ireland	€270,000
Amen Support Services Ltd.	€181,707
Breaking Through Ltd.	€214,440
Chronic Pain Ireland Ltd.	€110,635
Disability Federation of Ireland	€232,338
Grow in Ireland	€153,576
Irish Deaf Society	€269,700
Irish Penal Reform Trust	€268,874
Move Ireland	€236,500
The Irish Hospice Foundation	€265,926
The Neurological Alliance of Ireland	€269,402
Migraine Association Of Ireland Ltd.	€102,996
Autism Spectrum Information Advice & Meeting Point	€200,707
Irish Association for Palliative Care	€150,428
The Irish Local Development Network Ltd.	€262,000
The National Network of Women's Refuges & Supports (t/a Safe Ireland)	€266,528
Anam Cara Parental & Sibling Bereavement Support	€269,920
Irish Athletic Boxing Association	€172,514
Irish Senior Citizens National Parliament Limited	€265,066
Arthritis Ireland	€184,502
Irish Stammering Association	€118,010
National Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Ireland	€204,806
LGBT Support and Advocacy Network Ireland*	€170,855
<b>Total</b>	<b>€16,660,913</b>

\*GLEN engaged in a transfer of undertakings to LGBT Support and Advocacy Network Ireland (as of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017)