

PPN Implementation Roadmap

July 2024



Líonraí Rannpháirtíochta Pobail Éireann
Public Participation Networks Ireland

PURPOSE OF THIS ROADMAP

This Roadmap was initially developed as a follow-up to the *Public Participation Network (PPN) Structural Review* that was carried out in 2021/2022 and further refined following a consultation process with PPN stakeholders.

It was drafted by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) in collaboration with a Working Group of PPN stakeholders that was established to oversee its development and implementation. In line with the principle of *nothing about us without us*, this Working Group includes representatives of stakeholder groups who will be affected by the actions in the Roadmap. This includes each key grouping within the PPNs as well as those entities that work closely with PPNs, in particular the Local Authorities. The Working Group will monitor progress on the delivery of the individual actions agreed in the Roadmap to represent the needs of PPNs at every stage.

The overarching purpose of the Roadmap project is to implement changes to PPN structures to enable them to more effectively fulfil the overall objectives set out for them in the 2014 *Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government*.

With this in mind, the Working Group considered both the *PPN Structural Review Report*, which served as a non-binding starting point, along with written feedback provided by stakeholders, and made recommendations on actions that should be included in the Roadmap. The Draft Roadmap document was then circulated and followed by a consultation process with key stakeholders in order to inform further refinement and finalisation of the Roadmap.

The Roadmap sets out tangible actions to be taken towards fulfilling the project aim above, including details on the parties responsible for delivering each action and an estimated timeframe for each action.

BACKGROUND TO ROADMAP

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a structure that provides representation for the community sector in local authority policymaking structures. It serves as the main link between local authorities and the community sector, facilitating the two-way flow of information between the local authority and community groups to influence policy development and the delivery of services to the wider community.

Where community representation is required on local authority committees, such as Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) or Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) etc., it must be sourced through the PPN. This gives local volunteers a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities.

PPNs were established under Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. There is a PPN in each of the 31 local authority areas. Membership of a PPN is open to all volunteer-led/not-for-profit groups in a local authority area, and more than 18,500 groups nationwide are currently members of a PPN.

PPN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The participation of citizens in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities are at the centre of democracy. **Open and inclusive policy-making** increases public participation, enhances transparency and accountability, builds civic capacity and leads to increased buy-in and better decision-making.

PPNs provide citizens with an alternative way, **outside political parties or lobbies**, of channelling different views and securing a variety of interests in the decision-making process.

PPNs also **decide on their initiatives and workplans independently** of the local authority or other entities. They have discretion to decide on their policy priorities and on the approaches they use to carry out the PPNs' functions, while remaining **transparent** and **accountable** to their member groups and to their funders for how they use the public money provided to them.

Each PPN is **inclusive** and **participatory**, and values a range of **diverse views and experiences** within the local community. PPNs operate as **flat structures** so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and participate fully, and to ensure shared responsibility.

STRUCTURAL REVIEW OF PPNS

A review of Public Participation Network structures was conducted by an independent contractor (Mazars) in 2021/22 to evaluate the current structures in place. The purpose of the review was to:

- assess the operation of the network to date against the overall objectives as outlined in the 2014 Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government;
- identify opportunities for further strengthening and enhancing PPNS;
- make recommendations as to how to build on existing strengths and support the future development of PPNS; and
- highlighting examples of best practice already in operation and provide recommendations on how these could be replicated across the network where appropriate.

OVERVIEW OF REVIEW FINDINGS AND STAKEHOLDERS' WRITTEN FEEDBACK

The [review report](#) outlines findings in respect of the PPN structures and also puts forward recommendations aimed at improving them and addressing some of the current challenges.

The review identified a number of strengths of the PPN structure, including the fact that it:

- gives communities access to decision makers that would not otherwise be possible,
- provides a voice for communities in local decision-making,
- creates strong relationships between stakeholders, and
- delivers ongoing communication, engagement and information-sharing.

Areas that the report identified as requiring action or improvement include:

- Slow pace of action to address issues and implement change in line with recommendations arising from previous reviews and reports
- Lack of consistency in the implementation of mandatory PPN requirements and guidance
- Lack of visibility, understanding and awareness of PPNS
- Confusion around roles and dilution of responsibilities

- Difficulties in recruitment and retention of a diverse range of members and representatives
- Limitations in stakeholder relationships can impact the overall success of a PPN
- Significant duplication is occurring across the PPNs
- Challenges arising from differences in staff skills/employment conditions, and staff turnover

In 2022, all PPNs, Local Authorities and a number of other entities that work closely with the PPN network were given the opportunity to provide a written response to the review report. Key themes that emerged from the responses included:

1. Staffing and Resources: responses often expressed a desire for standardised staff terms and conditions across all PPNs, and for more funding to be provided to PPNs.
2. Roles and responsibilities: there was a feeling that roles and responsibilities of all involved needed to be clear to all involved and that currently the boundaries and responsibilities of different roles are not communicated clearly enough.
3. Organisational structure: many responses referred to the need to retain the involvement of the three colleges and of the Secretariats.
4. Communication and messaging – many responses emphasised the need for greater awareness of PPNs, and more knowledge-sharing.

This feedback was shared at the PPN Conference 2021, where attendees had a further opportunity to suggest ideas for future actions.

This feedback, as well as the responses themselves, were shared with members of the Working Group to inform their discussions and decision making during the development of this ~~draft~~ Roadmap.

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT ROADMAP AND SUBSEQUENT REFINEMENT

The first Draft Roadmap document was circulated to stakeholders and followed by a consultation process conducted by Crowe, in order to inform further refinement and finalisation of the Roadmap. The Crowe report indicated broad support among stakeholders, with some suggested refinements now incorporated into the Roadmap.

PPN COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

A number of actions in the Roadmap refer to the PPN Communications Campaign, which ran during 2023 and has now concluded. A number of Roadmap actions were addressed as part of the Communications Campaign, and this is noted against the relevant actions.

Nonetheless, there may be a requirement to refresh the training in future and/or to develop an online resource to facilitate access to updated training for PPNs. There is a need to develop approaches to these actions that build in sustainability and make sure that lessons learned and the value of the training provided is not lost.



Actions to address findings identified by structural review and by stakeholder feedback

THEMES IDENTIFIED BY REVIEW, OUTCOMES SOUGHT, AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES

1. GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

STARTING POINT

This section of the report looked at the governance arrangements that exist to enable the network to function and deliver its purpose effectively.

The report found that there was a slow pace of action to address issues and implement change, inconsistencies in different areas in the implementation of mandatory requirements, and differences in the 'cultures' of local PPNs.

OUTCOMES

The actions proposed by the report and by stakeholders under this theme aim to:

- go 'back to basics' by re-engaging with the fundamental purpose of the PPNs, and by reinforcing the principles and values of PPNs (including their independence) for all stakeholders
- ensure consistent good practice in terms of governance and compliance with the Handbook by all stakeholders across the network

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
1.1. Take a 'back to basics' approach and prioritise actions	1.1.A Clarify what a PPN is and is not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a short, plain English 'Guide to PPNs', clarifying role/purpose and principles and values of PPN, roles and responsibilities of staff, Secretariats, members and stakeholders (e.g. LAs, host organisations, DRCD, etc). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The guide should include visuals to aid comprehension and should be NALA-proofed. ○ To be made available on the DRCD website • Webinars could be made available for Local Authorities, Councillors and Government Departments to raise awareness • PPNs to explore making presentations at MD meetings, LCDC meetings, to LA management teams, etc. 	Roadmap Working Group (WG)	Short-term	1	
	1.1.B Training and communication to internal PPN stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaken as part of Communications Campaign 	DRCD/ Communications sub-group	Short-term	2	Y

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
	regarding PPNs' core work					
	1.1.C Prioritise the actions that will have the greatest impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadmap Working Group to flag 'foundation' recommendations and dependencies between Roadmap actions and identify priorities 	Roadmap WG/ DRCD	Short-term	3	
	1.1.D Revise the NAG Terms of Reference to reflect what is achievable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent third party to carry out review of the National Advisory Group (NAG) terms of reference, including engagement with NAG members and DRCD on their experiences Review of NAG is scheduled for end 2023/early 2024 	DRCD/ PPN NAG	Medium-term	4	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
1.2 Clarify mandatory requirements and proactively address non-compliance	1.2.A Clarify governance and monitoring arrangements for PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Independence’ is to be defined in a PPN context – what does independence look like for PPNs (a) in decision making, (b) in terms of staff liaison duties. Highlight independence and responsibilities of PPNs in relation to governance, good practice, public spending codes, etc. • Each PPN to consider reviewing its MOUs/SLAs to ensure that the independence of the PPN is at the forefront of the documents • Review relevant sections from the PPN Handbook, revise if required • Circulate to all stakeholders (consider whether a Circular is required) 	DRCD/ Roadmap WG/ Handbook sub-group	Medium-term	1	
	1.2.B Address areas of non-compliance across the PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Handbook to identify mandatory requirements • Each PPN to conduct an audit to check its compliance with existing mandatory provisions • ‘Comply or explain’ principle: if something is preventing a PPN 	Handbook sub-group PPNs	Short-term	3	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
		<p>from complying with a requirement, the PPN can explain the circumstances and DRCD will work with them to identify supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tracking indicators for compliance; consider whether developing KPIs might be beneficial • Consider whether further training is required; consider whether additional clarification of how PPNs should approach mandatory/ non-mandatory elements in Handbook is required. 	DRCD/ Roadmap WG			
	1.2.C Clarify escalation scenarios, processes and interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from Additional Supports project to be used to inform this action • Consider whether an additional section in the Handbook would assist • Consider undertaking a review of cases where challenges have arisen to identify learnings and help provide clear guidance 	Handbook sub-group	Long-term	4	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
	1.2.D Update the PPN Handbook and roll out good practices across PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbook update procedure is already agreed by sub-group • Undertake a scoping exercise to identify good practices and develop guidance on rolling out good practice across PPNs (in light of PPN independence) • As an example of best practice, regular meetings between PPN representatives and LA staff should be included as part of the MOU/SLA between PPN and Local Authority. Sample Terms of Reference for these meetings to be drafted for inclusion in a future update to the PPN Handbook. • DRCD will continue to encourage PPNs to use the information-sharing hub on Salesforce and to resource supports for same • PPN networks could consider undertaking a scoping exercise to explore whether alternative information-sharing opportunities would be useful/feasible 	DRCD/ PPN Staff and Secretariat networks/ Handbook sub-group / LAs/ CCMA	Medium – long term	2	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead Responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPNs to identify areas of common interest and consider whether further national events are required, or whether regional events would be more effective • Depending on need, hold shared capacity-building events. Consider making this a part of the annual national conference event each year 				
1.3 Review structures to ensure independence is maintained	1.3.A Consider introducing an annual declaration of independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each PPN to discuss and decide on for themselves 	PPNs/ host organisations	Medium-term	2	
	1.3.B Further consider the role of the Secretariat and review its purpose as part of the PPN structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the Secretariat should remain substantially the same • Consider any recommendations arising from the research on barriers to participation in PPNs, to allow for increased flexibility to facilitate volunteer members 	WG/ PPN Secretariat Network	Medium-term	1	

2.COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

STARTING POINT

This section focuses on the visibility of PPNs, existing communication structures and how they enhance engagement.

The report indicated a lack of broader public awareness of PPNs, as well as uncertainty around roles and responsibilities both among the PPNs themselves and among their wider stakeholders.

When stakeholders gave their written feedback, the following views came up most frequently in relation to these matters:

- Greater awareness of PPNs is needed
- PPNs should share best practices with each other
- The 'jargon' should be simplified
- Secretariat role should not change substantially, and increased flexibility is needed to facilitate them as volunteers
- Roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders need to be clarified and communicated more clearly
- The role/purpose of PPNs needs to be clarified and communicated more clearly
- External bodies require training on PPNs

OUTCOMES

The actions proposed by the report and by stakeholders under this theme aim to:

- improve the visibility of PPNs and their impact
- simplify and clarify PPN structures and purposes to improve communication with internal and external parties

Top-level recommendations	Actions	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
2.1 Introduce a PPN wide communication structure that improves the visibility and accessibility of PPNs	2.1.A Allocate responsibility for PPN wide communication and building the PPN brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaken as part of Communications campaign 	DRCD/ Communications sub-group	Short – medium term	3	Y
	2.1.B Address the visibility gap and communicate in a more accessible way: <i>cut use of jargon</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibility gap addressed by Communications campaign Use of plain English to continue to be prioritised and encouraged by DRCD, e.g. requirement in RFTs circulated by DRCD, PPN publications, etc Reviewing language used to date internally by PPNs (e.g. to member groups, linkage groups) and providing guidance to PPNs on simplifying terminology Plain English training made available to PPN staff as part of Communications Campaign 	DRCD WG / Communications Sub-Group	Short – medium term	2	Y
	2.1.C PPNs should be supported and enabled to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training provided as part of Communications campaign 	DRCD	Short-term	1	Y

Top-level recommendations	Actions	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
	communicate their impact on policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether further action is needed, and if so, the form this should take, its impact on resources (of LA, PPNs), etc. • In this regard, for example, develop an impact framework which would allow PPNs to record and communicate their impact on policy; this could be used to record both successful and unsuccessful actions, to facilitate learning and allow PPNs to improve – there may be a facility to do this within the Salesforce platform? 	WG/LAs/CCMA			
	2.1.D External bodies require training on PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training already available via online portal • DRCD will encourage participation 	DRCD/ CCMA/ LAs	Long-term	4	Y

Top-level recommendations	Actions	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
2.2 Simplify roles and responsibilities to provide clearer descriptions for stakeholders	Provide guidance and support to improve knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaken as part of Communications campaign and Additional Supports project 	DRCD/ Communications sub-group/ Additional Supports sub-group	Short-term	N/A	Y
2.3 Embrace opportunities for flexible models of engagement	Enhance use of technology and ensure resources are in place to enable more flexible engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid meetings now a common feature for PPNs • Scoping exercise to explore whether further training on relevant areas would be useful e.g. development of an IT tool that would allow for the collation and inputs for PPN reps on committees 	Secretariat Network/ Staff Network	Short-term	N/A	Y

3. COORDINATION & PARTICIPATION

STARTING POINT

This section considers the impact of the PPN structures and relationships on coordination and participation.

It considers the effectiveness of the “three college” structure and the linkage groups in ensuring that a wide range of groups are engaged with at local level.

Challenges identified by the report in relation to this theme include difficulties in recruiting and retaining representatives, limitations in stakeholder relationships, and lack of coordination leading to missed opportunities for PPNs.

When stakeholders gave their written feedback, the following views came up most frequently in relation to these matters:

- Many stakeholders were positive in principle about the idea of a national structure, but felt more detail was needed on what this would entail before a decision could be made.
- The current three colleges (community & voluntary, social inclusion, and environment) should remain in place
- Each PPN should remain an independent structure
- Some processes should be standardised across all PPNs

OUTCOMES

The actions proposed by the report and by stakeholders under this theme aim to:

- achieve greater participation by reducing frictions
- improve local coordination and relationships
- introduce a national structure tasked with coordinating across the network of PPNs

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
3.1 Minimise the barriers to participation experienced to achieve greater partnership in participation	3.1.A Simplify the college structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three colleges to be retained • Clarify the groups represented by Social Inclusion strand • Examination of options for groups that fit into more than one college (e.g. allowing groups to specify a 'primary' college and 'secondary' college). The implications of any agreed change will be explained clearly to member groups (e.g. voting rights will be retained under the primary pillar; Environmental Pillar stipulations to be retained) • Explore whether further information on the college structure can be provided through Salesforce 	C&V Pillar/ Environmental Pillar/ Social Inclusion Pillar	Medium-term	3	
	3.1.B Provide targeted support and reduce over-reliance on volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore providing meeting supports for PPN representatives (with reference to the <i>Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making</i>) with DHLGH/ CCMA/ LAs 	DHLGH / CCMA / LAs / PPNs	Medium-term	1	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRCD will continue to recommend and facilitate early contact with PPNs where engagement (e.g. on consultations, etc.) is required/requested • Development of PPN-specific supplement to DRCD's existing <i>Guide to Inclusive Engagement</i> for dissemination to the broader government sector 	DRCD			
	3.1.C Improve diversity across the PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contract has been awarded to S3 Solutions for research on diversity and barriers to participation in PPNs with a report expected in Q3 2024 • Further steps to be taken dependent on results of research 	NAG/ DRCD/ PPNs	Medium – Long-term	2	Y
3.2 Strengthen relationships and improve communication and engagement	3.2.A Strengthen DRCD's role on strategic and national level support for PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRCD to continue to provide national level supports • Additional Supports service in place to assist on areas of operational difficulty for individual PPNs 	DRCD NAG / WG	Medium-term	2	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
between PPNs and stakeholders		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following conclusion of Additional Supports service contract, an evaluation report is to be produced to identify areas of ongoing difficulty and recommendations for future assistance and action/how best to proceed • New co-ordination structure will provide key supports at operational level 				
	3.2.B Strengthen relationships with decision makers at a regional and local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish trust and respect that makes collective action possible • Enhance PPN involvement at the preparation stage of relevant processes before meetings etc. begin • In collaboration with DHLGH, CCMA, LAs, explore adding PPNs to the list of prescribed bodies for local Development Plans this would enable PPN views to be separately referenced in CDP/bye-laws 	PPNs/ DHLGH/ CCMA/ LAs	Long term	1	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
3.3 Introduce a PPN wide coordination structure	3.3.A Allocate responsibility for PPN wide coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each PPN should remain an independent structure but where appropriate some processes should be standardised across all PPNs • Scoping exercise to determine which processes can be standardised across PPNs (in this regard, note that e.g. income and expenditure returns, inputs to Annual Report are already standardised) and to consider the implications of developing a central PPN-wide coordination structure • Consideration of whether a national structure could offer a career progression opportunity for PPN staff • This exercise to be iterative in character • Development of a guide for external bodies on how to engage with PPNs where community input is required; this could set out e.g. timeframes, 	NAG/ WG/ DRCD	Long-term	1	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
		templates for engagement, forums for engagements, support required, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping exercise to determine whether there are possible European Models of citizen participation that might inform the central coordinating body 				
	3.3.B Mandate the use of Salesforce as the primary tool for data capture and engagement: a 'one and done' approach to data capture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already a requirement DRCD will continue to encourage PPNs to use Salesforce and to resource supports for same Identify the PPNs that are currently optimising their use of Salesforce and encourage them to share information on how and why they are using it with other PPNs. Consider establishing a dedicated sub-group to create a development plan on use of Salesforce, which could be rolled out over a couple of years 	DRCD PPNs / Staff Network NAG	Medium-term	3	

Top-level recommendation	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether the development of a separate information-portal for PPNs to share common processes/examples of good practice is required 				
	3.3.C Connect with and contribute to other Local, Regional and National Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with other existing participation structures (e.g. Older People’s Councils, Comhairle na nÓg) to explore the development of official networks for engaging with other groups 	NAG / WG / DRCD	Long-term	2	

4. TRAINING, DELIVERY & SUPPORTS

STARTING POINT

This section looks at the supports available to and provided by the PPNs.

It considers the training in place and how effective it is in addressing the needs and enabling the PPNs to deliver on their purpose.

On the above theme, the report found that the approach to training delivery was not consistent across PPNs, that there is significant duplication occurring between PPNs, and that the PPNs have limited capacity for both their current activities and for taking on new activities.

OUTCOMES

The actions proposed by the report and by stakeholders under this theme aim to:

- provide consistent operational processes to avoid PPNs 'reinventing the wheel' where common activities are concerned
- support and resource PPNs to contribute to strategic/national-level issues

Top-level recommendations	Action	Proposed Approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
4.1 Develop a 'PPN Way' of addressing and delivering the role of PPNs	Provide consistent induction and training to ensure all stakeholders have the same understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some training resources already in place which could be used and consideration could also be given to tapping into training being delivered in other area, e.g. training under <i>Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy</i>, the National Volunteering Strategy, from the Charities Regulator, etc. • DRCD can continue to make induction/other relevant training available, and will continue to encourage participation by all stakeholders (including elected councillors, new members, etc) • In the longer term, the national coordination body could take on responsibility for making training available 	DRCD/ NAG/ WG	Medium – long term	N/A	y

4.2 Adopt a 'single source of truth' approach to PPN guidance and support	4.2.A Single source and contact point for guidance, tools, supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional supports service currently provides a single point of contact for assistance on HR related matters; following conclusion of contract, the evaluation report will make recommendations on future assistance and action/how best to proceed. 	NAG / DRCD	Medium term	2	
	4.2.B Hold regular regional meetings to share good practice, coordinate on local policy issues/challenges, provide mentoring and support across regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a pilot project to explore supports needed to hold regular regional meetings of PPNs. As the Midlands PPNs already hold regional meetings, they could be used as the pilot region. • Learning from pilot to be used to develop a model to be rolled out to all regions • Findings will also feed into action 3.3, the development of a PPN-wide coordination structure 	DRCD, Midlands PPNs	Short - medium term	1	
4.3 Clarify expectations of PPNs and provide necessary support to address issues of national importance	4.3.A Clarify expectations of PPNs in relation to areas of national importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping exercise to explore how PPNs see their potential for involvement and clarify their needs in the area (e.g. the timeframe they would require in order to consult with members, or for internal processes to elect reps etc to take place, capacity to produce reports, preferred means of communication/engagement, other 	Roadmap WG	Medium term	3	

		<p>needs specific to PPNs), and to explore the needs of those conducting consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could feed into 3.3.A and contribute to the guide for external bodies on how to engage with PPNs 				
	4.3.B Resource PPNs to input to areas that can deliver real impact and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the scoping/exploration exercise in 4.3.A, resource implications to be considered and addressed • DRCD is open to receiving proposals from PPNs and their Networks in this regard 	DRCD	Medium-long term	1	
	4.3.C Introduce measures to advance sustainable development and improve the support provided to PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with DECC, explore training/capacity-building opportunities geared towards sustainable development for PPNs 	DRCD / DECC / PPNs	Medium term	2	

5. STAFFING & SKILLS

STARTING POINT

This section looks at the skills and experience required by PPN staff in order to effectively deliver on the role of the PPNs.

The report identified challenges arising from the differences in the skillsets of PPN staff across the country, from differing staff terms and conditions, and from the level of staff turnover.

When stakeholders gave their written feedback, the following views came up most frequently in relation to staffing:

- Staff terms and conditions should be consistent nationally
- More staff resources are needed
- A career progression path for staff is needed
- Staff roles are currently not clear enough
- PPN staff salaries should be based on a higher grade

OUTCOMES

The actions proposed by the report and by stakeholders under this theme aim to:

- bring consistency and clarity to HR practices for all stakeholders across PPNs
- improve the performance and prospects of PPN staff

Top-level recommendations	Action	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
5.1 Clarify staff requirements and address gaps in skills and competencies	5.1.A Clarify the skills, experience and competencies required for PPN staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A template role profile is already available and could form the basis for this piece of work • Clarify which skills and competencies are indispensable and which are 'ideal'/desirable • Commission a review of the current work profile of PPN staff and benchmarking against existing LA grade structure; this could include a gap analysis of staff skills and competencies against the agreed framework if useful • Guidance could then be prepared on developing job descriptions for PPN staff that are consistent with social inclusion principles (e.g. whether a 'full clean driving licence' should be a requirement) 	PPNs/ DHLGH/ LAs / CCMA / PPN hosts	Short – medium term	1	Y
	5.1.B Complete a <i>Training Needs Analysis</i> across the PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This formed part of the work under the Additional Supports service contract • PPNs could consider conducting this needs analysis on a regional basis to identify common areas of interest and organise regional 	PPNs	Medium term	2	Y

		training tailored to their needs – would enable resources to be pooled and facilitate networking				
	5.1.C Revise staff titles to clearly align to activities i.e. PPN Coordinator and PPN Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For consideration by individual PPNs 	PPNs	Short term	3	
5.2 Further consider employee Terms & Conditions	PPNs to ensure that employee terms and conditions are compliant with current legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is already underway under Additional Supports service contract to produce a manual with guidance on all relevant legislation, codes of practice, etc. Once the manual is available, it will be for each PPN to consider whether changes are required 	PPNs	Medium term	N/A	Y
5.3 Provide more proactive and coordinated HR support	5.3.A Allocate responsibility for HR related matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional supports service currently provides a single point of contact for assistance on HR related matters; following conclusion of contract, the evaluation report will make recommendations on future assistance and action/how best to proceed 	Advisory supports contractors	Medium term	2	

PPN Implementation Roadmap

	5.3.B Develop a best practice guide to recruitment for PPNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building on the findings from 5.1.A, consideration to be given to developing a best practice guide to recruitment for PPNs	PPNs/ DHLGH/ LAs / CCMA / PPN hosts	Medium term	1	
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6. ADDITIONAL ACTIONS PROPOSED BY STAKEHOLDERS

In written feedback and at the 2022 PPN Conference, stakeholders suggested additional actions and suggestions for the Roadmap. Those suggestions have been incorporated into actions throughout the Roadmap. However, the actions below did not fit within the five themes, and have been listed separately here.

Additional actions suggested by stakeholders	Proposed approach	Lead responsible	Timeframe	Priority	Commenced
6.1 Increased funding/ more staff resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in funding for PPNs was secured in 2023 PPNs could consider collaborating to produce evidence of additional need and producing a business case which DRCD could use in requesting additional funding as part of the annual Estimates process 	PPNs	Medium term	N/A	Y
6.2 Multi-annual funding is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Await outcome of Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024, action 4.1; DRCD is tied to an annual budget process for the time being 	DRCD	Medium – Long term	N/A/	