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Director, VCU

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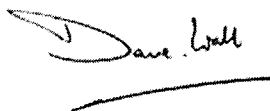
To: Single Equality Bill Team
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

SINGLE EQUALITY BILL FOR NI

**RESPONSE FROM THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY UNIT OF THE
DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

It is noted that the consultation document includes consideration of the extension of the legislation to include volunteers. This issue has raised several concerns within the Voluntary and Community Sector. Concerns have also been expressed by statutory sector funders of such organisations. It has been concluded that any such extension of the definition of employment would serve to damage the interests of volunteers, the promotion of volunteering and the voluntary and community sector. The factors which have led to this conclusion are as follows:-

- Neither the Voluntary and Community Unit nor the relevant Home Office Unit in London have received documented evidence of discrimination against volunteers. If such discrimination exists, it is at a level which has not been sufficient to be measured accurately;
- The most effective mechanism for protecting the interests of volunteers together with the Voluntary and Community Sector would be the establishment and introduction of clear agreed guidelines on the involvement of volunteers;
- The comparison of volunteers to employees would be offensive to many volunteers;
- The comparison would be likely to create additional confusion and difficulties in relation to the receipt of Social Security Benefits;
- The treatment of volunteers as employees would be likely to create further difficulties in relation to liability insurance;
- Any promotion of a claims culture within volunteering would be likely to cause significant damage to the reputation of the Sector in addition to their ability to obtain liability insurance; and
- The extension of the definition of employment could adversely impact on several Government voluntary initiatives, including volunteering for under-represented groups and also asylum seekers.



DAVE WALL