Can philanthropy and government work effectively together? A case study from Ireland

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Abstract

This paper reports the interim findings of a study of a number of major co-investments by The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) with government in Ireland. The investments are primarily in the areas of children and youth, dementia, and disability policy. The focus of the paper is on the nature of the partnership relationship and the influence of Atlantic on government policy and practice. The context for the study is the fact that Atlantic is a life-limited philanthropy that ceases operation in Ireland in 2017. The study is being funded by Atlantic and is due for completion at the end of 2017.

The lessons learned from the experience of a philanthropy seeking to work directly with government in the achievement of social outcomes are of particular importance. Working together is not a straightforward task. Governments and philanthropies have different perspectives and emphases that need to be understood and addressed if they are to cooperate effectively.

Introduction

The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic), established in 1982 by Irish-American businessman Chuck Feeney, is a global limited life foundation dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. It has operated in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Vietnam, and has made grants totalling more than €7.5 billion, with over €1.1 billion invested in the Republic of Ireland.

Atlantic's grant making in the Republic of Ireland began in 1987 and the final grants were made in 2016. In the first phase, up to 2003, the focus was on higher education with investments in physical infrastructure across university campuses. This phase culminated in a signature investment in the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI), co-funded with the Irish government. The partnership with government on PRTLI was the first time that Atlantic had worked directly with a government anywhere. The aim was to transform Ireland's capacity to undertake world-class research.

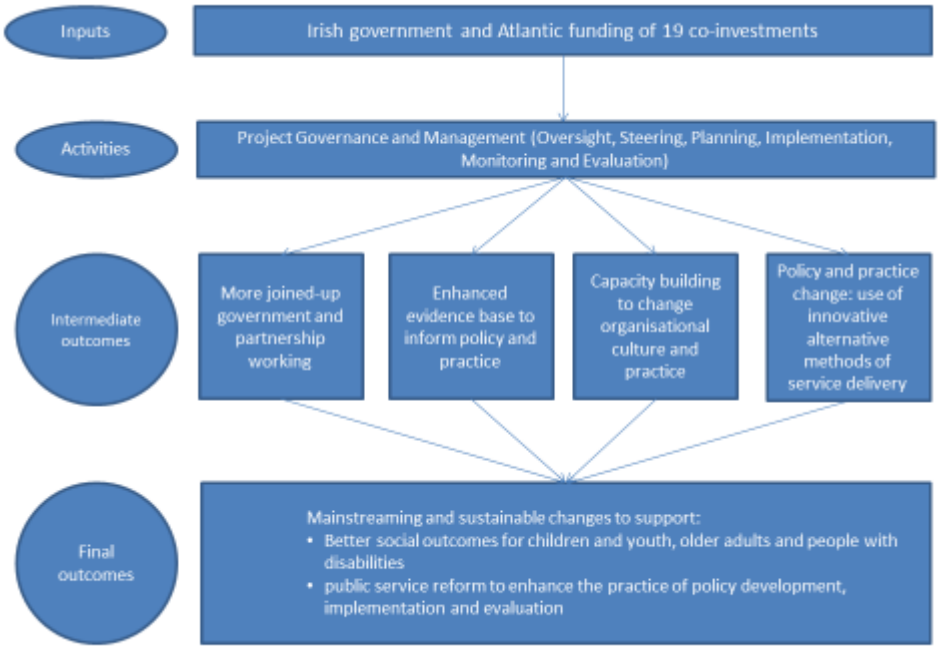
Phase two of Atlantic's grant making in Ireland began in 2003. Since then Atlantic has concentrated on three areas: ageing, children and youth and reconciliation and human rights. The particular focus of attention in this study is on nineteen co-investments with government in the Republic of Ireland since 2012 supported by Atlantic. Atlantic's €99m investment in the areas of children and youth, dementia, and disability has leveraged €260m in public funding. These are very substantial sums of money. Atlantic's work with government is one of the most distinctive features of its funding approach.

Questions to be addressed include: (a) what is the learning from Atlantic's work with government as to how philanthropy, civil society organisations and government can work together to build capacity and enhance policy and service delivery, and (b) what has been the

effect of Atlantic working with government on public service reform? The theory of change behind the review is set out in Figure 1.

The study of the influence of Atlantic on government policy and practice presents methodological challenges. These include taking into account the role of other factors or conditions, attribution, the long time scale over which change takes place and organisational capacity and engagement. It will not be possible to judge the full impact of many of the grants for a number of years. In these circumstances, what the study aims to achieve is to provide rigorous evidence of movement and progress, and the contribution made by Atlantic.

Figure 1 Theory of Change for Influencing Government Policy and Practice



To address these challenges and questions an approach based on contribution analysis was used. Contribution analysis is an approach developed by Mayne (2001) whereby on the basis of evidence gathered, a reasonable person can draw conclusions as to the contribution an intervention has made to effectiveness and impact.

With regard to tools and techniques the following are being used:

- *Literature review*. A review of relevant literature on the relationship between government and philanthropy was undertaken to provide an oversight of approaches, issues and challenges with regard to government and philanthropy working together.
- *Key informant interviews*. Interviews with stakeholders are an important source of information. Interviewees include senior officials from a range of government departments and agencies, selected managers from civil society organisations who were grantees of Atlantic, and members of Atlantic.
- *Case vignettes*. Using this approach, particular interventions are examined and highlighted, to illustrate what contributed to their success or failure with regard to their impact on public service provision and reform.

- *Documentary analysis*. Careful review of relevant documentation (evaluation reports, government policy papers, academic literature, etc.) was undertaken to provide supportive evidence of the contribution made by Atlantic to government reform.

These approaches are used to provide evidence to support or refute the theory of change established for the study as outlined in Figure 1. This theory of change is designed to show how the interventions of Atlantic were intended to influence government policy with regard to public service reform. The theory is that Atlantic's co-funding of projects with government in the areas of children and youth, ageing, and disability, through their approach to project management (oversight, steering, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) results in more joined-up government and partnership working; an enhanced evidence base to inform policy; capacity building to change organisational culture and practice; and policy and practice change to encourage innovative, alternative model of service delivery. These changes in turn result in final outcomes in the form of mainstreaming and sustainability of change to support better social outcomes for children and youth, older adults and people with disabilities, and reform of public services.

A brief overview of the literature on government and philanthropy working together

In recent years there has been a growing interest in how government and philanthropic organisations can work together with regard to the achievement of social goals. Working together, however, is not a straightforward task. Governments and philanthropies have different perspectives and emphases that need to be understood and addressed if they are to cooperate effectively (Ferris and Williams, 2012). And these different worlds of philanthropy and government are not static. Philanthropy has often been viewed by government as a niche activity, supplementing government or filling gaps not served by government. However, as Anheier and Leat (2006, p.14) note: 'In many countries, changing ideas about the role of the state in meeting the social, educational, cultural and environmental challenges of modern societies have brought private voluntary action and philanthropy closer to the centre stage of policy debates'. Harrow and Jung suggest that this new interest in philanthropy by government is an international phenomenon and that 'it reflects a wider redefining and reconfiguring of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, civil society and the private sector towards more strategic and collaborative alliances' (2011, p.1048).

Many governments are struggling with the ever increasing demands on the welfare state, while at the same time managing control of public expenditure in an unstable economic environment significantly influenced by the lasting effects of the widespread global financial crisis in 2008. In this context, philanthropy is seen by government as one of the potential contributors to addressing the challenges faced.

At the same time as government's views on philanthropy have been evolving, the world of philanthropy has also been changing. Knott and McCarthy (2007) state that philanthropic foundations face limitations due to the often small size of spending compared to the size of the social problems faced. This had led to a realisation amongst some foundations that they will not affect social problems on a large scale unless they work with government to address the issue.

According to Schmitt (2015) philanthropy is moving from a situation where it is viewed as somewhat akin to the research and development arm of government, funding pilot

programmes and evaluations in the expectation that government would mainstream good practice, towards a realisation that 'It wasn't enough for foundations to produce good ideas or test them, without actively pushing them as better public policy' (2015, p.549). In this scenario, philanthropies are much more active in engaging with government and civil society to achieve their aims.

In summarising the move towards more interaction between government and philanthropy, Ferris and Williams note:

> While government and philanthropy have a history of joining forces to address critical problems, these efforts have often been informal and episodic with a good dose of happenstance. There is growing evidence that foundations of various types and scale are taking active steps to engage with government on a more formalized and continuous basis. At the same time, governments are exploring new ways to leverage philanthropic assets and to advance innovative solutions to public problems in the context of spiralling budget deficits that are compelling governments to "do more with less" (2012, p.1).

Young (1999) sets out three different strands of economic theory to support alternative ideas of the non-profit sector relationship to government that can equally be applied to the relationship between philanthropy and government: (a) the supplementary model, whereby philanthropy is seen as fulfilling demand for public goods that government does not provide; (b) the complementary model that views philanthropies as partners to government, helping deliver public goods largely financed by government; and (c) the adversarial model in which philanthropy prods government to change public policy and government attempts to influence philanthropy through regulation. Young makes the point that these three perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The complementary model has gained particular emphasis in recent years. Knott and McCarthy (2007, p.322) note that philanthropies, aware of the limitations of their impact on a national scale, often want to work in partnership with government to achieve their broad societal goals.

In a study of US federal government and philanthropic foundation partnership, Person et al. (2009) identified five main types of United States government - foundation interaction: incidental overlap, supplementary action, communication, coordination, and collaboration. They emphasise that 'only the latter three types of interactions represent true partnerships, and each comes with its own opportunities and challenges. In particular, there is a trade-off between stronger partnerships and higher transaction costs. Hence, there is no "best" partnership model for all situations - and in some program areas or initiatives, partnerships may not be appropriate or possible'.

However, partnership and collaboration between philanthropy and government is not without its challenges as the case of the Yaniv project outlined by Almog-Bar and Zychlinski (2012) illustrates. The Yaniv project was established in 2003 and headed by three Israeli philanthropic foundations. Its aim was to promote a new policy for dealing with children and youth at risk. The foundations undertook to raise 250 million dollars over a period of five years, with this total matched by the national government, which supported the project. In November 2004 the foundations terminated the collaboration with government. The project was reduced to several independent, largely locally based programmes. The project ended in 2007. The study indicated that a mixture of structural and personal factors affected the

operation and ultimate breakdown of the partnership. Government and the foundations each had very different views about the nature of the collaboration. Government representatives saw the main role of the foundations as being engaged in the development and implementation of services, not to 'interfere' in the policy making process. The foundations, on the other hand, viewed the collaboration as one between equal partners. They saw themselves as key actors in the policy making process.

There are therefore both risks and rewards for government and philanthropy in the development of partnership working. With regard to government, potential rewards of working with philanthropies include the fact that philanthropies have sufficient resources and space to allow them to innovate, be flexible and creative, take risks, fail and take the longer-term view, all things that governments traditionally are not so good at (Anheier and Leat, 2006, Thümler, 2011). Risks for government working with philanthropy include the fact that philanthropies can walk away from, as well as choose to stay with, particular areas (Harrow and Jung, 2011). And depending on the political perspective of government, the possibility that the very wealthy can use their money to reshape social institutions may present a risk, putting power in the hands of the donor and presenting jurisdictional challenges to the public sector (Rogers, 2015).

Rewards for philanthropy in working with government include the fact that it is often only at national government level that activities can achieve sufficient magnitude to bring about large scale change to address social problems. Acting alone, philanthropy is often small-scale in nature compared to the size of the problem (Knott and McCarthy, 2007). Government can provide the resources, structures, technologies and ability to diffuse innovative approaches across systems and make them sustainable (Thümler, 2011). Risks for philanthropies in working in partnership with government include the challenge that government may be motivated to develop partnerships as a way of compensating for budgetary restrictions in state welfare (Almog-Bar and Zychlinski, 2012). More generally, governments and politicians change and new governments bring different perspectives, making long-term relationship building difficult, particularly if a philanthropic foundation becomes closely identified with one administration (Knott and McCarthy, 2007).

Atlantic's approach of working with government in Ireland can be characterised as primarily conforming to the complementary model as described by Young (1999), and as a collaboration, in terms of a full and formal partnership, as described by Person et al. (2009). In the following sections, the progress made by this partnership-based approach is assessed using progress against the desired intermediate outcomes as specified in Figure 1 as the main criteria for assessing the strengths and limitations of joint working.

Promoting joined-up government and partnership-based working

The idea of joining up government is, as Hood points out, 'a new term … for an old administrative doctrine … that doctrine was conventionally called coordination' (2005, p.19). Concern about the lack of joined-up policy and the need for more coordination and partnership within and across all aspects of government, and those who work with government, is not new. But as MacCarthaigh and Boyle indicate:

> What is new, however, is the scale of the task involved in contemporary attempts to join up government, and the variety of ways in which governments seek to overcome

> institutional, cultural, and other barriers to create a more integrated approach to policy creation, delivery, and implementation. Furthermore, governments now routinely engage in new forms of collaboration with non-government or civil society organisations in a bid to achieve a joined-up approach to policy problems (2011, p.214).

Atlantic took the view that working in partnership with government and its agencies was important if it was to achieve its objectives. This has meant working directly with government in terms of co-funding programmes. Atlantic has also encouraged grantees in the voluntary and community sector to work in partnership with government and its agencies to secure effective service design and delivery and inform policy.

Partnership between government and philanthropy offers the potential for addressing shared goals. However, differences between the two in their approach, outlook and governance norms may constrain their ability to work together. As one study has shown, government and philanthropy increasingly view partnerships as critical to increasing their impact but seldom understand how the other operates or what an effective philanthropic-government partnership might look like (Ferris and Williams, 2012).

In the case of Atlantic, working in partnership with government in Ireland has long been seen as a means of delivering its goals, recognising the key role government plays in the development and implementation of policy and practice in the areas of interest to Atlantic. Grant funding of activity in the ageing and children and youth programmes is largely based on an approach where matching funding by government is required for the initiative to proceed. Atlantic's involvement is seen by them as an investment, and not just a charitable donation, which represents a shift in relationship between philanthropies and government.

The partnership approach between Atlantic and government has evolved over time. At the start there was suspicion of Atlantic in some government circles. For Atlantic's part it appeared to be content to stay in the background and to work through civil society organisations. When Atlantic worked directly with the government it was often in private. As Atlantic staff and government officials grew more comfortable working together, the relationship developed and became more public. There is now more direct engagement between government and Atlantic.

In interviews with policymakers, the consensus was that the Atlantic approach to partnership with government is both positive and pragmatic. Policymakers welcomed the fact that Atlantic had an understanding of how government works including the political realities and context for decisions. There was seen to be a good working relationship at a high level in the system. Atlantic received praise from policy makers interviewed for their willingness to 'work with the grain' in relation to building relationships with government.

Atlantic's Board met on occasion with senior government ministers and top officials from the main government departments. There was also good contact on a more regular basis between senior Atlantic staff in Ireland and senior officials from the government departments involved in delivery in the programme areas. Public officials clearly understood Atlantic's position that it would only engage in these partnerships if the government was willing to work in a context of genuine dialogue and partnership. And the fact that Atlantic brought significant

financial resources to the table acted as an added incentive to take them seriously. Thus from the start there was a solid basis for a partnership approach to evolve.

Having clear, performance-oriented agreements between government and Atlantic was seen as a plus by policymakers, reflecting the more 'formal' side of partnership. All project partnerships had a memorandum of understanding (MOU), agreed and signed by both Atlantic and government agency senior personnel and which provided the framework for the work. MOUs were seen as important in clarifying expectations. The focus on performance and outcomes in the MOU were also viewed as helpful in providing a clear sense of direction for the partnership. The fact that continued funding is linked to the achievement of milestones set out in the commitment letter gives a hard edge to the MOU. At the same time, MOUs are not cast in stone, and it is possible to amend and adapt the documents if there is agreement on all sides.

Whilst broadly viewed as positive, a partnership with Atlantic was also seen by policymakers as presenting some challenges. A finite pool of public funding existed which was reduced even more during the recession starting in 2008. During this period of austerity, additional public funding was ring-fenced for joint programmes with Atlantic, which meant that this money was not available to meet other demands. Some policymakers mentioned that at times personnel in statutory agencies that weren't part of these joint programmes felt that Atlantic-supported projects were getting attention and resources that should have been devoted to addressing their needs. It was also felt by a couple of those interviewed that Atlantic had more limited engagement with middle management in government agencies, and instead focused most of its attention on building relationships with senior management. These interviewees pointed out that it is often at this middle management level that programmes can be made or broken, and that effective partnership requires effort at this level also.

To move on to another strand of partnership-based working, Atlantic have also encouraged partnership between the civil society organisations it grant-supported, and government agencies, to promote better policy development and delivery. For example, Genio (a civil society organisation supported by Atlantic to develop better ways to support disadvantaged people to live full lives in their communities) has worked with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to promote more personalised, community-based services for the elderly and people with disabilities. Whilst this has been challenging at times for Genio and the HSE, which have been critical of each other, it is also seen as having contributed to positive outcomes by interviewees. This supports the view of the external evaluators of Genio (MorrowGilchrist Associates, 2014: 81) that '… HSE foresee the partnership consolidating and view Genio as a key component of the 'change architecture' required to drive the fundamental system-wide reform'.

A common element of many government/civil society partnerships facilitated by Atlantic was the ability to convene in a neutral space, where decisions could be made on things like resource distribution in a neutral environment without political pressure, often using an independent chair. This facilitated engagement was often based on the use of the Chatham House rule whereby positions could be challenged and debated before they appeared in the public domain. A particular strength of the partnership approach adopted is that it has encouraged good working relationships through enhancing clarity about the nature of the partnership and partners' roles. As one interviewee noted, this does not mean that all

participants are equal – some are more powerful than others – but it helps them work in a collegial manner.

This is not to say that the partnership approach always ran smoothly. Within both the civil society and statutory sectors there were reservations about interaction and views that one side did not really understand the other. Interviewees from the statutory sector noted that some staff from their organisations looked on with some jealousy at the resources devoted to Atlantic grantees and projects, as their own budgets were being cut. Some civil society participants found statutory organisations to be bureaucratic and resistant to changing traditional ways of doing things at times and hard to deal with in this context. Elements of partnership suffered as a result of the recession, with the retrenchment by government, more centralisation of decision-making and control and less collaboration. A significant challenge noted by several interviewees across different programmes is that of the constantly changing personnel involved from the public service organisations. People are moved for career development, on promotion, to solve problems elsewhere etc. and this means relationships have to be built with new people.

In part, such challenges reflect the continuing and long-standing dilemma of establishing an appropriate balance between the autonomy of civil society organisations and the public accountability requirements of government agencies for the use of public funds supporting joint working (Boyle and Butler, 2003). The Ageing Well Network, composed of representatives from the public sector and civil society organisations concerned with ageing issues, for example, faced challenges of government officials becoming less involved over time and civil society organisations perceiving their voice as being less valued than those of government participants (Parker, 2015: 13).

Enhancing the evidence base

Atlantic has put significant effort into enhancing the evidence base used to inform policy development. With regards to interventions they have supported for children, for example, Little and Abunimah (2007: 61) note in relation to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland:

> In designing the programme, many influences were brought to bear but two stood out strongly. First, it was clear that there was potential to bring a new perspective to ideas around community engagement. Second, it was considered that government expenditure would not be swayed by community engagement alone – that there was a need for high-quality evidence. The hypothesis was that governments on the island would take notice if rigorous and independent evidence showed that innovations for children and young people were having an impact on health and development. The marrying of community engagement and serious evaluation was never going to be easy, especially on an island where, as far can be ascertained, there had previously only been a single experimental evaluation of a programme intended to improve children's health and development.

Atlantic made significant investment in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes; the development of longitudinal studies and robust indicator sets; the building of academic capacity in research and evaluation; and the creation of mechanisms to connect evidence with practice. These initiatives have been undertaken with a view to developing an enhanced

evidence base to inform government policy and practice. An important intention behind the investment in evidence was that policymakers would make use of this evidence base to inform thinking about policy development and investment decisions.

With regard to moving towards more personalised services for people with disabilities, Healy and Keogh (2014) note the benefits of the emphasis on evidence gathering prompted by Atlantic:

> Providing evidence was also seen as important, particularly to inform budgetary allocations. … In terms of assessing the case for this new paradigm, there is a need to test whether it is more beneficial for service users and also if it is more cost-effective. Evidence was seen as central to this new paradigm, and that therefore there was a need to 'walk the walk' on this. Having hard evidence of impact was also seen as important to enlisting the support of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and private funders (pp. 79-80).

A particular benefit noted from the evidence generation was the creation of *Irish* cases that have been researched and documented. This is seen as a big plus by many policymakers. While policymakers draw lessons using evidence from abroad, such studies can also face challenges and resistance because some question the applicability of these cases in an Irish context. Having 'home grown' cases of the evidence of policy impact is important in persuading policymakers as to what works and what doesn't.

On the less positive side, several policymakers interviewed mentioned that they felt the approach adopted by Atlantic to evidence generation and gathering could at times be seen as burdensome and overly academic in nature (this despite the fact that the research approach was agreed between Atlantic and government at the outset of all programmes). Some interviewees said they needed shorter research or ongoing research briefs more attuned to the demands of the policy environment. Much of the research and evaluation work was carried out by academics in third-level institutions. These academics are driven, in terms of career development, to produce reports for high impact academic journals. By their nature, such reports are often not easily accessible or readily digestible by policymakers.

A couple of interviewees also felt that in some cases there is a danger that the emphasis on evidence gathering and results-based reporting might make participants more risk averse. The knowledge that they would be judged on specified results might make them less inclined to take chances and innovate. These more negative points reflect a wider international debate on the relationship between research, evidence and policy (see for example Nutley, Walter and Davies, 2007). They were made in a general context where the evidence-informed approach promoted by Atlantic was seen as welcome and important. It was more a question of balance from the perspective of policymakers as to the level and quality of evidence needed, not the need for evidence itself, which was universally welcomed.

The approach to evidence generation has influenced policy documents produced by government. For example, Atlantic's support for a major research study on dementia (Cahill et al. 2012) resulted in the production of evidence on current and future dementia prevalence; specified the main economic costs of dementia care; reviewed current service availability and estimated future demand for services; and reviewed best practice in dementia care locally and

internationally. This evidence fed directly in to the development of the Irish National Dementia Strategy. The strategy itself explicitly notes that it drew on this research in its production (Department of Health, 2014: 8). Cochrane et al (2013) state that without the intervention of Atlantic to provide the necessary information and impetus, it is likely that the strategy would have been subject to delay.

Capacity building

Capacity building is central to the sustainability of efforts to change the way policies are developed, implemented and evaluated, and services delivered Within the public services, Molloy (2011) notes that: '… a long list of institutional failures have been attributed ultimately to the prevailing culture of those institutions'. A feature of Atlantic's work with government has been that in many cases a portion of the co-investment has gone into capacity building initiatives to support cultural change and to build up competences in new ways of working. This is based around supporting leadership (at all levels) to drive cultural change, recognising, as Schein (2004, p.10) notes that leadership and organisational culture are 'two sides of the same coin'.

The importance of support for capacity building is highlighted by what happens (or doesn't happen) in its absence. In a study of partnership between government and NGOs at a subnational level in Australia, Gilchrist (2016, p.75) notes 'lack of funding made available to support the change management process represents a challenge … and this lack will likely have an impact on the ongoing move towards person-centred care and individualised funding in future years'.

The dementia programmes were mentioned by several interviewees as examples where networking is being used as an important means of building capacity. The dementia learning network, for example, is seen as a very useful means of building communities of practice around the ways of working being promoted by Genio and Atlantic. Similarly, Atlantic's funding has helped develop a dementia research community that wasn't there before. The Research and Practice Knowledge Exchange Network, in particular, has been influential in spreading knowledge and in the view of one interviewee wouldn't have happened without Atlantic.

Of course, capacity building and culture change is not a straightforward process. The interviews and evidence from evaluation reports identifies a number of significant challenges. For example, in the case of the dementia programmes, one interviewee noted that while Atlantic have 'sowed the seed' and have shown how capacity can be developed within the system (and in the wider community in terms of dementia awareness) there is still a long way to go. This interviewee identified three main issues:

1. Priorities – There is always something more urgent that needs to be tackled. While there is an awareness of the need to tackle ageing issues like dementia, it is not always the priority.
2. Funding/resources – Links to the above, as priority/urgent issues attract the funding. Though it was recognised Atlantic have helped immensely with this, as during the recession their funding allowed a lot of projects to happen which never would have got off the ground otherwise.

3. Undergraduate training of nurses – nurses are not being trained enough to deal with community and clinical settings. There is still a focus on acute care and hospital-based training.

The issues of prioritisation and resourcing were identified by others, particularly the challenge presented by the urgent driving out the important, and the pressures that exist, particularly in the health services, to respond to the latest crisis.

Harvey (2016) notes that the human rights education and training for the civil and public service, jointly supported by Atlantic and the Irish Human Rights Commission, has had a positive impact on capacity to date:

> An independent evaluation of the Irish Human Rights Commission programme showed among participants an improved knowledge of human rights principles and law, self-awareness of their own prejudices (e.g., race and gender) and an expectation of improved future policy, practice, governance, monitoring and evaluation from a low level (reduction in derogatory behaviour) to high level (policy). The programme provided reinforcement for those in the civil and public service committed to the highest human rights standards and challenged those previously unsympathetic. Several NGOs pointed to practical outcomes of training: there were many fewer examples of routine or low-level abuse in prisons or garda (police) stations compared to 2004 (p.7).

With regard to culture change specifically, the Person-centred Approach to Services for People with Disabilities programme, which is the longest running programme investigated here, and hence the one with most time to have influenced culture, shows some positive results:

> Within the scale of resources available to them Genio has been effective in demonstrating what espoused policy should look like in terms of practice on the ground. A particular strength has been addressing culture constraints and changing mind-sets as to how the service user is perceived at all levels within service organisations, which is viewed to be critical to building the capacity for system-wide change, consistent with public sector reform intentions. (MorrowGilchrist Associates, 2014, p60).

> A recurring theme was the major culture shift that had occurred in the organisation, usually phrased as a shift from ‘dependency to empowerment’; from ‘doing things for people to supporting people to look after themselves’. This was particularly evident in long-established agencies such as HSE services or major voluntary organisations (McConkey and Keogh, 2014, P.97)

Policy and practice change

Langford, when director general of the then Office of the Minister for Children, noted a key challenge from a government perspective of working with philanthropies and grantees with regard to service delivery. She was talking in the context of three demonstration sites

established under the prevention and early intervention programme (Kaoukji and Little, 2007: 72):

> The work with philanthropy is exciting but it also represents an act of faith that the sites will be able to implement, evaluate and mainstream their most effective services, that we will be able to keep the best of all of existing services going and that we will be able to learn sufficient to mainstream some combination of the two, both in the three communities and elsewhere in the country.

With regard to service delivery, a central goal for Atlantic was that through working with government their investments would not only benefit the civil society grantees and their service users, but they would also influence the way the public sector provides services. This would be done in two ways: influencing policy which directs the way services are delivered, and encouraging the development and use of alternative service delivery approaches within the public sector. This was seen as crucial to securing the mission of Atlantic to bring about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic's investments, though substantial, are only a small fraction of what the government spends in the provision of services for children and the elderly. Achieving lasting change in services for the disadvantaged requires change to be adopted across the public sector, not just in isolated pockets.

There are clear examples of the impact of Atlantic's involvement with government on policy. *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* and the *Irish National Dementia Strategy* were the two examples most frequently cited in the interviews with policymakers where it was felt Atlantic's influence had been strong. Other examples were also cited, such as the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* and policies under development such as the national Early Years Strategy.

The precise nature of Atlantic's influence is harder to define. Views were expressed by those interviewed that policy change wouldn't have happened, would have happened slower or wouldn't have survived without Atlantic. The most common and generally expressed view is that in most areas Atlantic has been involved, some policy change along the lines that have developed would have occurred anyway. This is because it was seen to be timely or important politically, or movements and trends in Europe or elsewhere would have prompted change. But it would have happened slower and to a lesser extent, without the same evidence base to support the direction of change.

Atlantic's involvement in alternative service delivery approaches has been a contributory influence on government policy in public sector wide reform initiatives. Work supported by Atlantic has influenced programmes for government, the policy programmes published by new governments at the start of their term in office. There are several examples in the 2016 *Programme for a Partnership Government* of commitments influenced by Atlantic supported initiatives.

Influencing policy statements is one thing, but getting these translated into practice is another. Some critiques of progress in this regard, and of how the policy may, in fact, play out in practice were present in the interviews and literature.

One interviewee, for example, felt that TILDA, a longitudinal study of ageing, has yet to have a significant practical impact on policy making. In preparation for commissioning further 'waves' of interviews of the over 50s, the Health Research Board asked various departments and the HSE what practical impacts TILDA had resulted in so far. There was a sense from the responses that not enough use is being made of TILDA at present. One reason for this is the long-term nature of the work. As the study continues and more long term data is produced it will have the potential for greater impact. But the interviewee notes it can be extremely difficult for policy makers to look beyond the term of government, the annual budget cycle and the day-to-day pressures and priorities.

One significant point that came up frequently in interviews was the slow pace of change with regard to policy and practice in the public service. Changing culture and practice is a job that requires a commitment for the long-haul. Indeed, one interviewee contrasted Atlantic's willingness to work long-term with government to other philanthropies they were aware of as one of the distinguishing characteristics of Atlantic.

O'Shea and Monaghan (2016, p.9), for example state that: 'The reality is that progress has been painstakingly slow in recalibrating the social care system in Ireland towards a personalised, needs-led, person-centred model of care for PWD (people with dementia)'. More generally, on a day-to-day level, there are many examples of delays in programme implementation.

Another issue, associated in part (but not entirely) with the time taken to implement the programmes, is the need to change direction in some instances. These changes of direction point to the need for flexibility on the part of Atlantic and government in their management of the co-investments. This is where the role played by the governance structures – oversight and steering groups etc. – are important in providing fora within which such issues can be teased out, and agreement reached on the most appropriate way forward.

Perhaps the biggest challenge as Atlantic winds down its operations is to ensure that good practice identified in its programmes is mainstreamed as far as possible into the wider public sector. Many of the interviewees commented on the challenges associated with mainstreaming and the issue of the 'scalability' of the Atlantic supported programmes.

Some interviewees highlighted the dangers of what one referred to as the possible creation of small pockets of excellence in a sea of muddling through. Reference was occasionally made in some interviews to the view that funding provided by Atlantic to grantees enabled them to provide services, conduct research, or pay staff at levels that would not be sustainable if mainstreamed across the public sector. Resistance to change across the public system was seen as strong (in areas such as the move to individualised and community-based care and away from institutional settings for example) and requiring a concerted effort to overcome. Civil society organisations were concerned about their future role in the context of losing funding support and in a commissioning environment which they were worried might focus on lowest price at the expense of other outcomes. In general, many interviewees, whilst positive about the potential for mainstreaming, noted that progress had been slower than anticipated. This was partly resource driven, given the scale of economic adjustment and

cutbacks in public spending associated with the financial collapse in Ireland since 2008. But it was also partly associated with the challenge of changing culture and practice in a rigid system.

A couple of interviewees stressed the importance of having government involved from the beginning, and that it is unlikely to get support for mainstreaming an initiative 'down the road'. Government partners need to be involved from the design stage as it gets progressively more difficult to get acceptance, even of good ideas, if government have not had an involvement.

Some of these challenges of mainstreaming change in a complex public service setting are encapsulated in a quote from a review of dementia care in Ireland:

> When savings are required, cuts are often directed at an already fragmented community care services for older people rather than areas where costs are largely fixed and difficult to reduce, such as spending on acute care services or residential care services … The paradox is that cutbacks in primary and community care services make it more likely that people with dementia are admitted to expensive acute care or long-stay care facilities, as family carers find it difficult to cope without adequate home-based supports. Preventing costly in-patient admissions requires investment in community care, not cutbacks to the very services that enable people to live longer in their own homes. While the health system recognises this paradox, the challenge of reconfiguring spending is difficult to address in the face of on-going 'crisis' management (O'Shea and Monaghan, 2016, p.6).

Where there is consensus is in the view that mainstreaming and sustainability requires the securing of a critical mass of support within organisations for the direction of change. In the case of the Person-centred Approach to Services for People with Disabilities programme, interviews with those involved in the project identified that:

> … if a tipping point was not achieved, backsliding was a distinct possibility. These interviewees highlighted that the progress to date was based on locating and supporting champions but that the desired 'user-centric' beliefs and practices were yet to become the new norm in the wider social services, and that if this wider culture was not addressed there would be a reverse to an approach more centred on service providers. From this perspective, there is a need to create a critical mass in one area of social service and then move to another to ingrain the beliefs and practices more widely (Healy and Keogh, 2014, p.82).

Conclusions

The evidence from the study to date suggests that, on balance, the experience of The Atlantic Philanthropies working jointly with government is viewed as a positive one. This conclusion was supported by the outcome of a roundtable discussion held in April 2017. Twenty-eight senior managers from the public service, civil society organisations and from the philanthropic sector were invited to discuss the lessons learned from Atlantic and the Irish government working together (Boyle, 2017). There was a general view expressed that a number of longer-term positive benefits have arisen from the partnership.

The study to date, however, also highlights challenges to mainstreaming the approach advocated by Atlantic in government. For example, whilst influential, the number of senior managers who could be seen as advocates for the kind of approaches to service delivery advocated by Atlantic are relatively small, and tend to be concentrated in a limited number of organisations across the public sector where Atlantic has focused its efforts. To this extent, it is questionable if a 'critical mass' has yet been reached which could be self-perpetuating across the public sector.

But overall Atlantic's work with government has generally been very well received by policymakers. In this, it contrasts strongly with the Israeli experience of the Yaniv project noted earlier (Almog-Bar and Zychlinski, 2012). It is interesting to contrast these experiences, which in the case of the Yaniv project the breakdown between government and philanthropy arose because of both structural and personal factors. In the case of Atlantic and the Irish government, structural factors that tended to support the relationship in the case of each grant included: clear partnership arrangements such as the outcome-oriented Memorandum of Understanding; the oversight group of high level managers to provide senior-level buy-in and negotiate any needed changes along the way; and the steering group to oversee implementation issues and problems. Personal factors that have supported the relationship include an explicit recognition on both sides of the long-term nature of the relationship, and the identification and working with champions of change in the public service. Atlantic is seen by many policy makers as having a good understanding of how government works, including the political realities and context for decisions, and tailoring their approach accordingly.

If philanthropy is to partner effectively with government, it requires recognition on both sides of the potential strengths and also the potential limitations of partnership. It is a long-term exercise where commitment and stamina to see the process through is important.

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