Area-level implementation of Connecting for Life

Findings of a Survey: Implementation enablers

Monitoring & evaluating the implementation of C*f*L

July 2019

Background: In response to Action 2.1.1 of *Connecting for Life* (C*f*L), Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020 HSE Mental Health led out on the development of 17 *'consistent multi-agency suicide prevention action plans'* across the country, in order to enhance and support local communities' capacity to prevent and respond to suicide. The implementation of these suicide prevention action plans involves a myriad of implementation teams, all with a shared vision of 'An Ireland where fewer lives are lost through suicide and where communities and individuals are empowered to improve their mental health and wellbeing'.

Towards the end of Q4, 2018, the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention's (NOSP) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team, as part of the evaluation of the implementation of C*f*L, set out to identify the extent to which evidence informed 'implementation enablers' are present as part of the implementation of the 17 local area C*f*L plans. To this end, all relevant stakeholders were invited to take part in a survey and share their reflection on their experience to date. This document summarises the key findings from this point in time survey.

'This paper summarises the findings from a survey of key stakeholders involved in the implementation of C*f*L area-level suicide prevention action plans.

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Resilient Communities

Key points:

- In December 2018 all key stakeholders (n= 450) involved in an area-level C*f*L implementation structure (i.e. either on a C*f*L implementation oversight group and/or a C*f*L working group) across 14 C*f*L suicide prevention action plans were invited to take part in a survey and share their reflections on implementation.

- While the response rate was very low (at 25%) there were enough valid (completed) responses (n=110) to report on. It is important to note however, that there may be a nonresponse bias.

- Survey evidence indicates the presence of key enablers associated with successful implementation including: stakeholder engagement (via oversight and/or working groups), leadership engagement, the presence of implementation plans to guide the work and implementation teams to 'do' the work informed by feedback from an implementation monitoring system.

- However, some stakeholders were not confident that there were available resources over a multi-year period to support the implementation of C*f*L – this in part, may be due to the HSE annual budgeting systems.

- There is evidence that more could be done to ensure that there are clear champions to drive the work of C*f*L locally. Capacity building for the implementation teams (i.e. oversight and working groups) would help ensure successful implementation of C*f*L. Furthermore, communication flow between the national and local structures could to be improved upon.

Background

Under ACTION 2.1.1 of *Connecting for Life* (C*f*L) HSE Mental Health is required to implement *'consistent multi-agency suicide prevention action plans to enhance communities' capacity to respond to suicidal behaviours, emerging suicide clusters and murder suicide'*. The implementation of this action resulted in the development (over a three year period from 2015 to 2018) of 17 area-level C*f*L suicide prevention action plans aligned to the national strategy. These action plans are the main mechanism through which the national strategy is realised at a community level. Local implementation structures i.e. oversight groups and/or working groups were set up to drive the bottom up implementation of C*f*L. These structures are supported by 22 HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (HSE ROSPs) who have overall responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the action plans.

The literature identifies a number of factors which facilitate effective implementation[1] of innovation (i.e. a new programme/ initiative/strategy). It is the combination of these factors, or enablers, which are vital for successful implementation. As part of the evaluation of the implementation of C*f*L, the HSE NOSP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team set out to get key stakeholders' perspectives on the extent to which 'implementation enablers' are present as part of the implementation of the area-level C*f*L action plans.

Method

All stakeholders involved in area-level C*f*L implementation structures (i.e. 450 individuals on either a C*f*L implementation oversight group and/or a C*f*L working Group[2] across 14 C*f*L action plans[3]) were invited to take part in a survey to share their reflection on implementing the action plans. Informed by a review of the literature, the survey focused on stakeholder perspectives on key implementation enablers such as:

- Leadership capacity to drive implementation at an area-level

- Resourcing of area-level implementation of C*f*L action plans
- Organisational support for, and staff capacity to, implement the area-level C*f*L action plans
- Communication systems to support the flow of information
- Monitoring and reporting systems to track implementation

A questionnaire was set up in Qualtrics© survey software and a link was circulated from the HSE NOSP M&E team to members of local area C*f*L oversight and working groups. The survey was circulated on 27 November and was requested to be completed by 11 December 2018.

Table 1 Survey Responses	(n)	%
Valid responses	(110)	24%
Incomplete responses	(76)	17%
No response	(264)	59%

The survey response rate was very low at 24% (n=110). Thus, there may be non-response bias, which occurs when the survey results obtained for the respondents differ from the results that would have been obtained from those who did not answer the survey, even though they were in the target sample. Response rates by area-level C*f*L action plans varied from 9% (C*f*L Wexford) to 42% (C*f*L Carlow). See Table 2 for a further breakdown of the response rate to the survey by C*f*L plan. Due to the low overall response rate, analysis and reporting has been restricted to reporting on the overall sample as opposed to by individual C*f*L plans. Results are presented separately for oversight group (n=80; 73%) and working group (n=59; 54%) members.

Key Findings:

Meaningful **stakeholder consultation** i.e. the integration of the opinions and concerns of relevant stakeholders into key decision-making processes is vital to ensuring buy-in for and implementation of, any innovation.

- The vast majority of both the oversight and working group respondents (80%) stated that there was (substantially/almost entirely) a perception among C*f*L stakeholders of the 'positive payoffs' from being part of the groups.

- Most respondents in the oversight and working groups (substantially/ almost entirely) agreed that stakeholders within the groups 'endorse' the C*f*L strategy (89% and 86% respectively).

- While over 80% of working group survey respondents stated that they were

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[1] See for example, Burke. K *et al* (2012) An Introductory Guide to Implementation (CES). Available at: https://www.effectiveservices.org/assets/Guide_to_implementation_concepts_and_frameworks_Final.pdf

[2] If participants stated they were members of both an oversight and a working group, they were asked to firstly answer the questions based on their participation on the oversight group and then answer the survey questions on a self-decided working group.

[3] At the time of survey, all 17 local area CfL plans were launched; however for three CfL plans implementation structures i.e. implementation teams and/or working groups had yet to be formed.

(substantially/almost entirely) 'adequately consulted about their role and function within the group', one in four of oversight group respondents stated that they were 'not at all' or only 'somewhat' consulted. (FIGURE 1 & FIGURE 2).

Leadership engagement i.e. the commitment, involvement and accountability of leaders[4] is identified in the literature as a key implementation enabler. Leaders can build momentum around the work, create a sense of urgency, provide direction and vision, help overcome challenges and create a climate that facilitates implementation. They can also play a key role in taking positive action to encourage others to participate by championing the work.

- The vast majority of survey respondents from the oversight (84%) and the working (80%) groups reported that there was (substantially/almost entirely) 'adequate leadership' in place to support implementation of C*f*L. Similarly the majority (85%) of oversight group members (substantially/almost entirely) agreed that there are 'clear champions' to drive the work of C*f*L at a local area-level. The corresponding finding amongst working groups members was lower (at 78%); 20% stated that there were 'not at all/somewhat' clear champions to drive the work of C*f*L locally.

- In terms of clarity around 'ownership of the implementation' of the local C*f*L plan, the vast majority of oversight and working group respondents (substantially/almost entirely) agreed that this was clear (86% and 83% respectively) (FIGURE 3 & FIGURE 4).

Available resources, more specifically the level of resources dedicated to implementation and on-going operations including money, training and education, physical space and time, have a direct influence on the extent to which area-level C*f*L action plans get implemented in a sustainable way.

- The majority of both the oversight and working group survey respondents stated that there was 'not at all/somewhat' funding available over a multi-year period to support the implementation of C*f*L (76% and 59% respectively). (FIGURE 5 & FIGURE 6).

- A higher proportion of working group members (60%) stated that resources (including staffing) were 'not at

all/somewhat' available to implement C*f*L compared with oversight group members (49%). (FIGURE 5 & FIGURE 6).

Implementation Teams comprise of individuals who are actively involved in implementing the innovation. They are the "who" of implementation. These teams are usually multidisciplinary, with members possessing the appropriate skills, time and decision-making responsibilities to ensure effective implementation of the innovation. Particularly on larger or longer-term efforts, sub-teams or working groups are often created. For the purpose of this survey the area-level C*f*L oversight and working groups were considered to be linked implementation teams. Members were asked about the functioning of these teams.

- Over four in five respondents from both the oversight and working groups reported that there were (substantially/almost entirely) clear group terms of reference; well chaired meetings; well managed stakeholder relationships; open and transparent decision making; and that the work of the group identifies C*f*L implementation priorities.

- Similarly, the majority of oversight (84%) and working group (72%) respondents (substantially/almost entirely) felt the work of the group was aimed at the progression of C*f*L actions through the stages of implementation.

- While four in five oversight group members (substantially/almost entirely) agreed the group was accountable for guiding the overall implementation of C*f*L, approximately two in five oversight and working group respondents were of the view that group members 'not at all or somewhat' held one another accountable for implementing activities. (FIGURE 7 & FIGURE 8).

An **Implementation Plan** can be thought of as a roadmap setting out the most effective way to address priorities and/or actions. Developing an implementation plan can help ensure accountability, identify potential barriers to implementation and guide the actions required by all parties to promote and support implementation.

- The presence of a plan to guide area-level C*f*L implementation up to 2020 was reported as being (substantially/almost entirely) in place by the vast majority of the oversight (84%) and working group (76%) members.

- Positively, four in five respondents stated that implementation plans were (substantially/almost entirely) referred to on a regular basis. While the vast majority (85%) of the oversight

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[4] The term leaders can refer to any level of an organisation including executive leaders, middle managers, front line supervisors and team leaders who have a direct or indirect influence on implementation.

group members (substantially/ almost entirely) agreed that individuals are accountable for implementation of their assigned C*f*L actions, 29% of working group respondents reported this as being 'not at all or somewhat' the case. (FIGURE 9 & FIGURE 10).

Individual behaviour change (which can drive organisational change) is at the heart of implementing new ways of working. In particular **staff capacity**[5], which includes the extent to which staff having the skills (i.e. capability), intentions (i.e. motivation) and no environmental constrains (i.e. opportunity) to implement, is paramount. Thus, building staff capacity to implement is pivotal in ensuring the desired outcomes are achieved.

- The provision of capacity building to oversight and working group members to facilitate implementation of the area-level C*f*L action plans was reported on negatively by respondents of both groups, with more than one in two saying this was 'not at all or somewhat' taking place.

- Positively, the majority of the oversight and working group respondents (77% and 72% respectively) reported that the composition of the groups were (substantially/almost entirely) adequate to meet implementation needs. (FIGURE 11 & FIGURE 12).

Providing **Organisational Support** such as having systems, policies and procedures in place within the organisation aligned with the innovation, is a key implementation enabler.

- The majority of oversight (76%) and working group (70%) members (substantially/almost entirely) agreed that there was a system in place to facilitate feedback from group members.

- While over 70% of respondents from both the oversight and working groups (substantially/ almost entirely) thought that group members' individual activities' aligned with the actions of the C*f*L plan, more than one in four respondents were of the view that this 'not at all/somewhat' the case.

- In terms of respondent's satisfaction with the implementation process of C*f*L, while the vast majority of the of the oversight group members (80%) rated this as (substantially/almost entirely) high, 30% of

working group respondents were 'not at all or only somewhat' satisfied. (FIGURE 13 & FIGURE 14).

Effective on-going **communication** is critical in motivating staff, overcoming resistance to change and giving and receiving feedback.

- More than four in five respondents reported that there were (substantially/almost entirely) 'appropriate methods of communication' as part of the operation of both oversight and working groups in place. Similarly, the vast majority of oversight (76%) and working group (81%) respondents (substantially/almost entirely) were of the view that 'structures and processes' were in place to engage stakeholders and keep them informed and inspired.

- Regarding the communication flow while a high proportion of oversight group respondents (77%) stated there was a 'substantial/almost entirely' flow of information across working groups reporting on progress against timelines, 38% of working group respondents stated that this was 'not at all/somewhat' the case. (FIGURE 15 & FIGURE 16).

Setting up **monitoring & evaluation systems** is essential to determining whether the desired indicators are being met and outcomes are being achieved. Monitoring and evaluation activities also help to identify risks to implementation and inform future action.

- The vast majority (80%) of oversight and working group respondents reported that it was (substantially/almost entirely) clear as to who is 'responsible' for overseeing the monitoring of the C*f*L plan. The majority of oversight (84%) and working group (70%) respondents reported that effective systems are (substantially/almost entirely) in place to monitor implementation progress and over 70% of respondents from both groups (substantially/almost entirely) utilise feedback from the system to 'improve implementation'.

- In relation to the 'reporting requirements' of the area-level plan, the majority stated it was (substantially/almost entirely). In terms of utilisation of the CHO Strategic Portfolio and Programme Management Office (PMO), it appears that this could be improved, with more than one in three oversight group respondents stating that this structure is (not at all/somewhat) being utilised. (FIGURE 17 & FIGURE 18).

[5] Michie, S.*et al* (2011) The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change Interventions. *Implementation Sc*ience 6:42

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TABLE 2

C*f*L Plan Name	Responses received	Total sample number	% response rate
C*f*L Carlow	11	26	42%
C*f*L Cavan Monaghan	10	34	29%
C*f*L Cork	11	47	23%
C*f*L Donegal	15	47	32%
C*f*L South Dublin / CfL Kildare & West Wicklow	12	44	27%
C*f*L Dublin South East, Dun Laoghaire & East Wicklow	10	59	17%
C*f*L Galway, Mayo & Roscommon	11	37	30%
C*f*L Kerry	7	51	14%
C*f*L Mid-West	10	49	20%
C*f*L Sligo & Leitrim	1	9	11%
C*f*L South Tipperary	6	22	27%
C*f*L Waterford	4	23	17%
C*f*L Wexford	2	21	9%
C*f*L Kilkenny	Implementation group(s) not in place at time of survey		
C*f*L Dublin North City & County	Implementation group(s) not in place at time of survey		
C*f*L Midlands, Louth, Meath CHO	Implementation group(s) not in place at time of survey		

*With two responses, the plan name could not be identified.

*C*f*L South Dublin & C*f*L Kildare West Wicklow groups have been aggregated due to the high number of individuals working under both of these plans.

*For C*f*L Cork and C*f*L Kerry, the Education & Training and the Communications group members have been double counted in the above total sample due to individuals on these groups working under both plans.

*The total sample number includes members of the implementation steering/oversight group and relevant working groups (if supplied). At the time of survey, some plans were still in the process of establishing implementation groups as part of their C*f*L plan.

'Stakeholder Consultation and Buy In' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 1

There is a perception of the positive payoffs off from being part of the group amongst members — 2.6%, 16.9%, 40.3%, 40.3%

I feel all stakeholders within the group endorse the CfL strategy — 2.6%, 9%, 32.1%, 56.4%

I was adequately consulted about my role and function within this group — 2.6%, 22.4%, 38.2%, 36.8%

■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely

'Stakeholder Consultation and Buy In' responses from Working Group Members (n=59)
FIGURE 2

There is a perception of the positive payoffs off from being part of the group amongst members	10% 10% 30% 50%	
I feel all stakeholders within the group endorse the CfL strategy	1.7% 11.7% 21.7% 65%	
I was adequately consulted about my role and function within this group	3.5% 14% 26.3% 56.1%	

Legend: Not at all/very limited · Somewhat · Substantially · Almost entirely/entirely

'Leadership' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 3

'Leadership' responses from Working Group Members (n=59)
FIGURE 4

'Resources' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 5

'Resources' responses from Working Group Members (n=58)
FIGURE 6

Sufficient funding is available over a multi-year period to support implementation
- Not at all/very limited: 25.5%
- Somewhat: 50.9%
- Substantially: 20%
- Almost entirely/entirely: 3.6%

Sufficient resources are available to implement CfL (including staff resources)
- Not at all/very limited: 19%
- Somewhat: 41.4%
- Substantially: 32.8%
- Almost entirely/entirely: 6.9

Legend: ■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

'Implementation teams' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 7

Statement	Not at all/very limited	Somewhat	Substantially	Almost entirely/entirely
The work of the group is aimed at progressing the implementation of actions within the CfL strategy through the stages of implementation		16.5%	31.6%	51.9%
Group members hold each other accountable for implementing actions/activities as planned	5.1%	32.9%	26.6%	35.4%
The group is accountable for guiding the overall implementation of CfL		12.5%	38.8%	48.8%
The work of the group focuses on identifying CfL implementation priorities	1.3%	13.8%	28.8%	56.3%
The group's work involves identifying barriers to the implementation of CfL and finding solutions	2.5%	22.5%	28.8%	46.3%
Decision making processes are open and transparent		13.8%	28.8%	57.5%
Stakeholder relationships are managed well amongst the group		10%	32.5%	57.5%
Meetings are well chaired and are conducted efficiently & effectively		3.8%	30%	66.3%
There are clear Terms of Reference for the group	1.3%	6.3%	30%	62.5%

'Implementation teams' responses from Working Group Members (n=58)
FIGURE 8

The work of the group is aimed at progressing the implementation of actions within the CfL strategy through the stages of implementation — Not at all/very limited 6.9%, Somewhat 20.7%, Substantially 27.6%, Almost entirely/entirely 44.8%

Group members hold each other accountable for implementing actions/activities as planned — Not at all/very limited 8.8%, Somewhat 29.8%, Substantially 28.1%, Almost entirely/entirely 33.3%

The work of the group focuses on identifying CfL implementation priorities — Not at all/very limited 6.9%, Somewhat 13.8%, Substantially 32.8%, Almost entirely/entirely 46.6%

The group's work involves identifying barriers to the implementation of CfL and finding solutions — Not at all/very limited 5.2%, Somewhat 24.1%, Substantially 31%, Almost entirely/entirely 39.7%

Decision making processes are open and transparent — Not at all/very limited 6.9%, Somewhat 8.6%, Substantially 24.1%, Almost entirely/entirely 60.3%

Stakeholder relationships are managed well amongst the group — Not at all/very limited 3.4%, Somewhat 13.8%, Substantially 29.3%, Almost entirely/entirely 53.4%

Meetings are well chaired and are conducted efficiently & effectively — Not at all/very limited 1.7%, Somewhat 8.6%, Substantially 27.6%, Almost entirely/entirely 62.1%

There are clear Terms of Reference for the group — Not at all/very limited 1.7%, Somewhat 17.2%, Substantially 24.1%, Almost entirely/entirely 56.9%

Legend: ■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

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'Implementation plan' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 9

'Implementation plan' responses from Working Group Members (n=58)
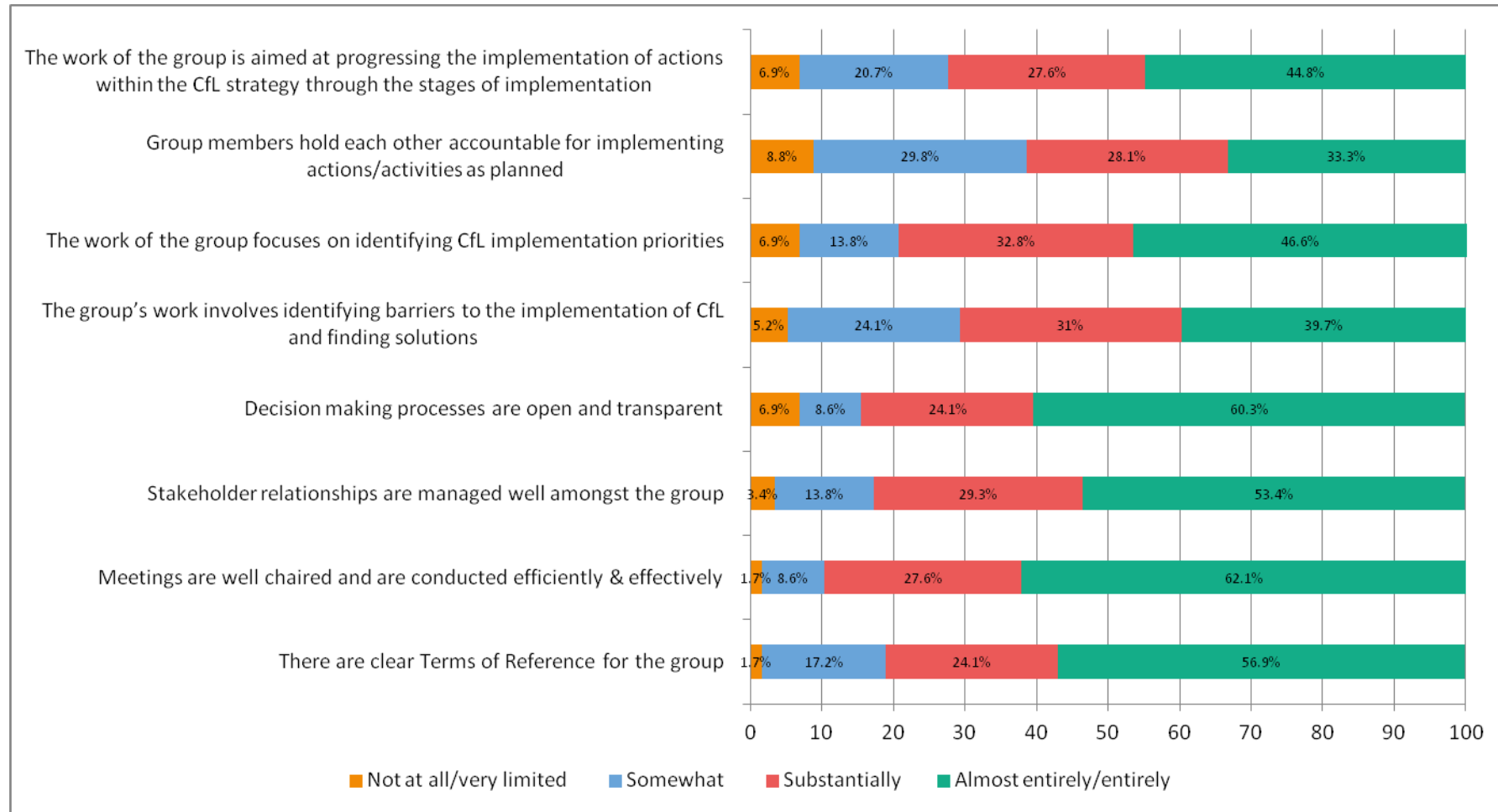**FIGURE 10**

Individuals are accountable for the implementation of their assigned CfL actions: Not at all/very limited 5.2%, Somewhat 24.1%, Substantially 37.9%, Almost entirely/entirely 32.8%

The implementation plan is referred to on a regular basis to ensure it is guiding the implementation process effectively: Not at all/very limited 5.2%, Somewhat 15.5%, Substantially 36.2%, Almost entirely/entirely 43.1%

There is an implementation plan in place to guide the implementation of CfL actions up to 2020: Not at all/very limited 6.8%, Somewhat 16.9%, Substantially 35.6%, Almost entirely/entirely 40.7%

Legend: ■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

'Staff capacity' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 11

'Staff capacity' responses from Working Group Members (n=57)
FIGURE 12

The composition of the group is adequate in order to meet the implementation needs of the CfL plan
- 10.5%
- 17.5%
- 40.4%
- 31.6%

Capacity building is provided to group members to facilitate the implementation of the CfL strategy
- 25%
- 26.8%
- 30.4%
- 17.9%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

'Organisational Support' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 13
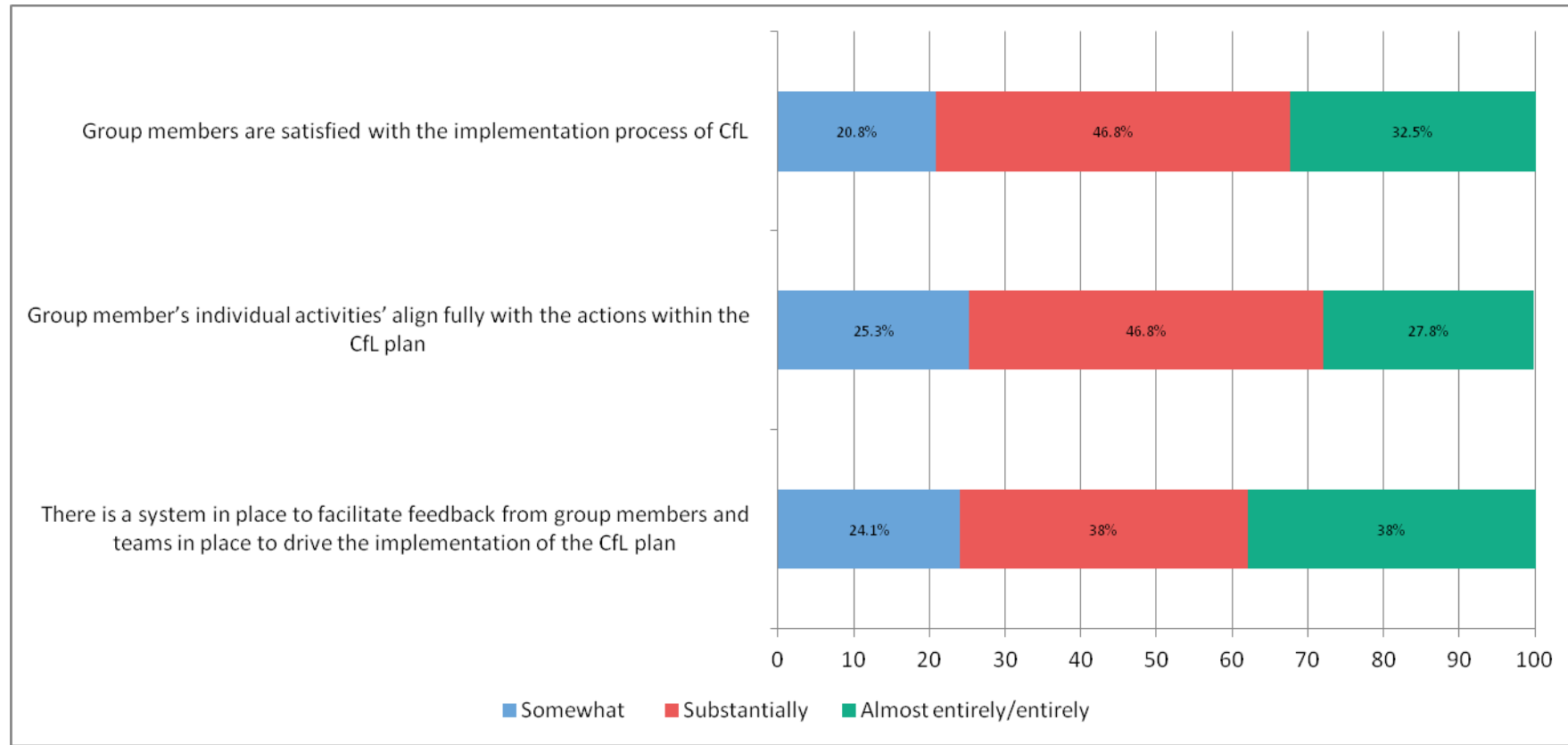
'Organisational Support' responses from Working Group Members (n=58)
FIGURE 14

'Communication' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 15

There is a flow of information across working groups set up locally to drive the implementation of CfL and they report on progress against set timelines — 4.1% / 18.9% / 40.5% / 36.5%

There is adequate communication between national and local structures to support the implementation of CfL — 8.9% / 21.5% / 50.6% / 19%

Structures and processes are in place to engage stakeholders, keep them informed and inspired — 1.3% / 17.7% / 39.2% / 41.8%

Appropriate methods of communication are applied as part of the operation of the group — 1.3% / 11.4% / 44.3% / 43%

Legend: ■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

'Communication' responses from Working Group Members (n=58)
FIGURE 16

	Not at all/very limited	Somewhat	Substantially	Almost entirely/entirely
There is a flow of information across working groups set up locally to drive the implementation of CfL and they report on progress against set timelines	15.5%	22.4%	34.5%	27.6%
There is adequate communication between national and local structures to support the implementation of CfL	17.2%	25.9%	34.5%	22.4%
Structures and processes are in place to engage stakeholders, keep them informed and inspired	10.3%	13.8%	43.1%	32.8%
Appropriate methods of communication are applied as part of the operation of the group	3.4%	13.8%	41.4%	41.4%

'Monitoring and Evaluation' responses from Oversight Group Members (n=80)
FIGURE 17

The CHO Strategic Portfolio and Programme Management Office (PMO) is utilised as part of monitoring the implementation of the local area CfL plan — 11.1% | 23.6% | 31.9% | 33.3%

There is clarity at a local area level as to the reporting requirements of the local area CfL plan — 8.9% | 20.3% | 29.1% | 41.8%

The group utilises feedback from the monitoring of implementation progress reports to improve implementation — 6.5% | 19.5% | 37.7% | 36.4%

There is an effective system in place to track & monitor implementation progress of CfL — 5.1% | 11.4% | 30.4% | 53.2%

It is clear at the local area level as to who is responsible for overseeing the monitoring of the CfL plan — 1.3% | 16.5% | 20.3% | 62%

■ Not at all/very limited ■ Somewhat ■ Substantially ■ Almost entirely/entirely

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'Monitoring and Evaluation' responses from Working Group Members (n=57)
FIGURE 18