

Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC)
20 May 2022
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Meeting Note

Attendees:

Minister for Social Justice
Ruth Marks – Chief Executive, WCVA
Gretel Leeb – Chair of Volunteering Cross Sectoral Leadership group
Rhian Davies – Disability
Claire O'Shea – International
Sheila Hendrickson-Brown - Intermediaries
Cath Hicks – Education and Training
Chris Johnes – Community
Derek Walker – Social Enterprise
Gethin Rhys - Religion
Karen Whitfield – Environment
Matthew Williams – Sport & Recreation
Ruth Power – Housing
Victoria Lloyd – Older People
Helene Hayes – Advice & Advocacy
Lowri Jones – Welsh Language
Andrea Cleaver – Asylum Seekers & Refugees
Hadassah Radway – Ethnic Minorities
Selima Bahadur – Ethnic Minorities
Clair Brick - Employment
Iestyn Wyn – Sexual Orientation
Berni Bowen-Thomson – Community Justice
Owen Evans – Children & Families

WCVA Officials attending:

Anna Nichols – WCVA
Matthew Brown - WCVA
Ben Lloyd – WCVA
Fiona Harris – WCVA
Alison Pritchard - WCVA
Natalie Zhivkova - WCVA

Welsh Government Officials attending:

Chris Buchan – Head of Communities and Third Sector Branch
Paul Dear - Communities Impact of Brexit Project
Aaron Fortt – Policy Lead, Third Sector Team
Janine Yearsley – Third Sector Team
Lisa Clarridge – Third Sector Team
Helen Brown – Third Sector Team (Note Taker)
Liz Hawkin – Communities Division

Apologies:

Philip Fiander – Chair, TSPC Funding & Compliance sub-committee

Agenda item 1 - Open and Welcome.

The Minister for Social Justice (MSJ) opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and confirming that there are no outstanding actions from the last TSPC and noting that the minutes had been published on the Welsh Government website.

MSJ thanked Rocio Cifuentes for her support over the years as a TSPC member and also a member of the TSPC funding and compliance sub-committee as she has stepped down to take taken up her new role as Children Commissioner for Wales. The Minister wished Rocio all the best in this this role.

Agenda item 2 - Update on Ukraine from the Minister for Social Justice

MSJ informed TSPC that she regularly meets with Minister of State (Minister for Refugees), Lord Richard Harrington and her Scottish counterpart the Minister for Culture Europe and International Development, Neil Gray SP along with weekly Welsh Government meetings chaired by the First Minister which signifies the cross-Government response to this crisis.

MSJ takes every opportunity to raise concerns with the UK Government on the delays with visas, delays in approvals to travel, issues around safeguarding and funding. This response is not being funded to same extend and level of the response to the Afghan evacuation last August with the family scheme element not being funding at all leading to a lot of responsibilities placed on citizens and families but also Local Authorities and or Public Services. Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary and with a super sponsor role having 5 welcome centres. Welsh Government has set up a third sector Ukraine group who are now beginning to look at some of the more operational aspect of support that can be provided. Initial focus is on supporting the wellbeing centres; ensuring access to advice and advocacy services; safeguarding women and children; enabling grassroots organisations to provide support through local community activities such as befriending, volunteering, and social events; and helping families to remain connected and reuniting were applicable.

The Croeso Sanctuary Fund set up by Community Foundation Wales has received £1 million Welsh Government donation and will be publishing their criteria soon for grant applications.

There are a lot of Ukrainian refugees who have been in Wales for a little while and have specific language skills who would like to volunteer, the MSJ would like to see these people linked into the volunteering networks in Wales.

The MSJ shared her oral statement in the meeting chat which that was made in plenary on 17 May <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/12841#A72116>

Agenda Item 3 - Health of the Sector

The MSJ handed over to Ruth Marks and TSPC members to discuss issues that are generally affecting the Sector. Noting a particular interest in hearing about the

impacts of the Cost-of-Living crisis which is overwhelming and also TSPC thoughts on the Levelling Up/Shared Prosperity funding. MSJ shared that she had been working closely with Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Economy to ensure the third sector interests are being properly recognised and represented.

Before handing over to several TSPC members Ruth Marks (RM) acknowledged the wide representation across the sector at this TSPC. RM mentioned that there are connections with the levelling up agenda and recent discussions had with the Minister for Finance and Local Government and sector representatives. RM described the sector as “valued”, “equal”, “stretched”, “scared” and “juggling” before handing over to Ruth Power (RP), Homes for all Cymru.

RP reflected on the cost-of-living crisis which is driving an increased demand on third sector services and with this demand expected to increase further. There is a caution that the cost of living can almost take the place of Covid whilst the impact of the pandemic is still live. In the housing sector there are elevated numbers of homeless and housing needs in the wake of the pandemic. Across the sector organisations are seeing people presenting with much more complex needs, particularly in terms of mental health and emotional well-being which requires more support and time from third sector services. The challenges for clients are also reflected in many ways in our workforce, where pay is not particularly high, leading to greater wellbeing support. RP has seen staff having to leave and take higher paid salaries in other sectors in order support their families which leads to holes in vacancies in an already pressured environment.

Vicky Lloyd (VL), representing age alliance, echoed the comments of RP regarding the complexity of issues, anxiety and increase in demand for services. RP also noted there is a struggle to find and keep experienced advisors.

Helene Hayes (HH) Advice & Advocacy - The complexity of issues is so significant for advisors because there are far less solutions. It is clear household budgets are under enormous pressure and that people are making the choices of eating or heating. There are also worrying stories of disabled people not being able to pay for the electricity that they need for the aids that they need to be able to live a full life. Energy debt has more than double compared to pre pandemic and stands at record levels. These problems which are being seen on the frontline now are expected to worsen during the winter months when people are at more risk of living in cold homes. Organisations have seen more people at the start of this year than they have in last five years. With more referrals than ever to crisis support such as food banks.

MSJ acknowledged the points raised, recognising how deeply people have been affected by the pandemic, especially among the most vulnerable which has deepened inequality. The issues around staffing and recruitment needs to be closely watched and links to the work being done TSPC covid recovery report support workstream.

As a response to the lock down report Welsh Government are working with the disability task force on the impact of the pandemic on disabled people. On 7 June Welsh Government will be launching an Anti-Racist Wales action plan.

Many of your organisations joined the cost-of-living crisis summits, the first with Minister for Finance & Local Government (MF&LG) and Minister for Climate Change, which looked at tackling fuel poverty and the second on tackling food poverty. Welsh Government are doing all they can to get cash to people's pockets, for example looking at how the fuel foundation/vouchers can help some of the most vulnerable who rely on pre-paid energy meters and working with organisations helping with food poverty. Welsh Government will be launching a more vigorous 'What's Yours' campaign to ensure as many people get the help they are entitled too.

MSJ will continue to support third sector organisations where possible and will also continue to lobby UK Gov. on issues such as the windfall tax, upgrading benefits in line with inflations and the reinstatement of the £20 to universal credit.

Derek Walker (DW) raised concerns about the impact of losing EU funding and the potential loss of skills and support. DW welcomed and thanked the MSJ for the increased influence of Welsh Government on UK funds. The sector would welcome consideration being given to third sector's intervention skills and support in the development of any match funding regional plans. The third sector are not at the table for many of the decisions on Regional and Local investment plans and in project development. Whilst third sector representatives are working to change this the continued influence from MSJ with Local Authorities to change this is important as the best projects are developed collaboratively.

MSJ referred to the statement from Minister for Economy regarding the methodology of the distribution of the funding by UK Government which redirects funds away from the areas where poverty is most concentrated. MSJ informed TSPC that she would be having a bi lateral with MF&LG to discuss issues around a community policy and a review of the code of practice.

Agenda item 4 - Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report 'Relationships' work stream.

Chris Buchan (CB) updated on the developments of the 'relationship' work stream of the TSPC covid recovery report. While the progress against the work stream itself is not advanced as anticipated there has been lots of activity happening around relationships. There are good examples of strong relationship/partnership working across areas such as Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Powys. The sector has led in the work of the community resourcefulness partnership who comprise of the sector, Local Authorities, Health and Social Care Bodies and the building of the work with Social Care Wales is fantastic. In addition to this there's a lot of research happening looking at sustainable community led activity and how it can empower communities - with organisations such as MOVE (Shielfield and Hull University), Public Health Wales and the Centre for Public Policy. Welsh Government has funded a programme which has brought five communities

together looking at transformation programmes. Relationships between the Grant Centre of Excellence and the funding and compliance committee have made headway particularly around longer-term funding which provides some stability to the sector. Just before the pandemic Welsh Government released research on community asset transfers and work is underway across Government on delivering those recommendations. Given all this activity it has been agreed to stop, pause and reflect as one of the lessons of the pandemic is that new work should complement and not duplicate community activity. When the group looked at recovery three areas were identified, which were

- To define what it meant to involve communities
- Identifying areas to influence policy
- Setting out community policy

The next steps will be to hold a workshop with the sector, public sector partners and private sector partners, third sector officials are working with WCVA to arrange a date which will probably around July. The main aim of the workshop will be to consider how it helps and can enable a community policy.

Paul Dear (PD) updated on the Community Policy work. There have been several factors which have delayed this work, such as recent world events which have taken resourcing. To address this a cross Government internal senior community policy board has been established and have met three times. Officials have done an extensive mapping exercise and identified more than hundred relevant programmes and funding streams gathering key information on each one. We will shortly be publishing findings from research done by Sophie Baker of Bangor University and KAS department on place based approaches on community engagements. All this work will now inform the next stages of the Community Policy which will include engagement with the sector, officials are in the process of developing option on this engagement to present to the Minister.

Anna Nicholl (AN) referenced the report on the Community Led Transformation programme which WG helped to fund. It has been recognised how important the community led response was to covid and will be to tackling the sort of crisis that we have heard about at TSPC today. It builds on evidence already gathered and shows how everyone has a part to play in community development in their communities. AN expressed how important it is to keep momentum going in this area in order to build on this work.

Lowri Jones (LJ) a member of the national leadership group reflected how useful this piece of work was not only for the members of the leadership group but also for those communities who took part. The work confirmed the effectiveness of community led programmes and projects. highlighting the urgency needed to follow up this work which identifies the challenges that can limit community led groups.

Chris Johnes (CJ) stated how important this piece of work (i.e. WG's Community Policy) is and although the slowness of pace can often be frustrating, it is fully understandable The foundation of the work should be much stronger as a result.

CJ's concerns are that the next steps are not taken because of a small amount of research. Stating there is the practical experience of hundreds if not thousands of organisations working in communities now and have done so for a long time. While academic research is useful, it is often developed by people who are not working and delivering on the ground. The next stages should allow the voices of those working on the ground in our communities who will ultimately deliver any new policies to be heard.

MSJ gave her support to this work and agreed it was important that we articulate properly relationships at national, regional and local levels.

Agenda Item 5 - Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report 'Support' work stream.

Matthew Brown (MB) spoke on behalf of Phil Fiander, Chair of the TSPC funding and compliance sub committee who wanted to pass his thanks to officials and especially the Grant Centre of Excellence for the work in preparing the guidance for the longer-term funding which has been approved. This worked well because of the early engagement with the sector and officials adopting a collaborative approach. The sub-committee is keen to carry on co creating work with officials.

As part of the delivery of its action plan the sub-committee have discussed if the code of practice for funding the sector (the code) is now fit for purpose and needs to be reviewed. The code sets out the key principles which underpin the Welsh Government's funding for the sector and what Welsh Government expects from the sector in return. Since it was published in 2014 the funding and legislative landscape has changed hugely, e.g. Future of Generations Act. The code also contains a range of information signposting to best practice on procurement, commissioning, grants terms and conditions, impact assessments etc which much of is now out of date. With the introduction of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund there is a greater reason to review the code and who adheres to it. The sub-committee wants to work with other bodies and especially Local Authorities and Health Boards who will hopefully consider and take on the code with the funding that they administer. The timescale for this review is anticipated to be at least 12 months to ensure proper engagement. The sub-committee are asking for the MSJ and TSPC approval and endorsement to undertake a review.

Rhian Davies (RD) who is a member of the sub-committee also welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the GCoE and officials and agreed to the Code being reviewed and refreshed. The review will not be without challenges, primarily how we get recognition and adoption of the code not just within Welsh Government but also the Public Sector and possibly even other funders.

Iestyn Wyn (IW) welcomed the appetite from Welsh Government on a more sustainable longer term funding model but asked for consideration to be given to those smaller grass route organisations who would find it hard to access this sort of funding as this longer-term funding does often favour the larger National organisations.

Andrea Cleaver (AC) raised concerns on the length of time which it has taken to get money released to support the Ukraine effort. There has been a massive

spike in requests from, both families, Ukrainians families and the public as the messages from UK Government have not been advertised effectively. This is also the case in Wales where information is not readily available.

MSJ asked TSPC to endorse the review of the Code of Practice for funding the Third Sector. This was accepted and the MSJ agreed to promote the refreshed code in plenary.

MSJ asked CB to take back the issues on communication raised by AC to the relevant officials and share links in the chat for information, noting that Welsh Government has not received any additional UK funding to help with this response.

Agenda Item 6 - Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report 'Volunteering' work stream.

Following an introduction from the MSJ, Gretel Leeb (GL) chair of the newly created Volunteering Cross Sectoral Leadership group gave an update on the work being undertaking in this group. The group is newly formed and has met 3 times since September last year. The group is made up of sixteen members with a broad span of expertise has been amplified by each member setting up what is being called a personal reference circle who are actively involved or interested in aspects of volunteering. This means the deliberations of this groups are being tested and enhanced by a much wider team of possibly over eighty people.

Initial decisions on priorities for this group centred on the 2019 UK RCS report. These included the importance of understanding and working more effectively with the diverse and complex motivations volunteers, the need to refine and improve the map of volunteering in Wales and the importance of a strategic approach to future support. These and other points have been reinforced in the more recent academic partnership research report commissioned by the communities' team. Themes highlight in these reports include the need to strengthen the infrastructure and enhance volunteering engagement in sustainability and in particular investing in place. There's a recurrent warning in all research that formal and informal volunteers must not become a sticking plaster for wider societal problems or be leaned upon to replace statutory services. The firm emphasis is that support for volunteers need to go hand in hand with measures to address socio economic inequalities. These priorities and pointers for future policy development were further clarified and strengthened by the two recent events organised by WCVA with the support of the Volunteering in Wales network. The first major and urgent task that the group has undertaken is to make recommendations on the setting of a milestone against the Volunteering National Indicator for Wales. GL asked that TSPC members and their partners look out for the consultation which will live shortly and submit a timely and considered response. Over the summer and following the consultation the group will then be undertaking a review of the Volunteering Policy in Wales.

MSJ thanked GL for the update on the volunteering work and was pleased to hear that the Volunteering Policy in Wales was going to be reviewed.

AoB

No items were discussed under AOB

The MSJ closed the meeting by thanking all members for attending.