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Attendees

Andrea Cleaver, Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Bethan Webber, Social Enterprise

Catrin James, Youth

Chris Johnes, Community

Clair Swales, Regional and Local Intermediaries

Hayley Richards, International

Helene Hayes, Advice and Advocacy

Hugh Russell, Children and Families

Iwan Thomas, Community

Kathryn Robson, Education and Training

Lowri Jones, Welsh Language

Matthew Williams, Sports and Recreation

Owen Derbyshire, Employment

Rachel Rowlands, Health Social Care and Wellbeing

Rhian Davies, Disability

Rosie Cribbs, Social Enterprise

Tanya Harrington, Sexual Orientation

Ruth Power, Housing

Victoria Vasey, Gender

Gretel Leeb, Chair of Volunteering Cross Sectoral Leadership Group

Phil Fiander, Chair of TSPC Funding and Compliance Sub-Committee

WCVA

Lindsay Cordery-Bruce, Chief Executive Officer

Matthew Brown, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Sara Sellek, Assistant Director of Strategy and People

Janine Downing, Assistant Director Support and Invest

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Livia Pietromarchi, Policy Networks Officer
Kelly Chamberlain, Partnerships Support Officer

Welsh Government officials

Amelia John, Director Communities and Social Justice
Chris Buchan, Head of Third Sector Policy and Support
Lisa Clarridge, Third Sector Policy and Support
Helen Brown, Third Sector Policy and Support

Agenda Item 1: open and welcome

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice (CSCSJ) open the meeting by thanking everyone for attending this first face to face TSPC in 4 years as well as it being it her first as CSCSJ. She welcomed Dr Lindsay Cordery-Bruce (LC-B) to her new role as Chief Executive of Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and thanked Ruth Marks (LC-B predecessor) for her dedication and commitment to the third sector throughout her time as Chief Executive of WCVA.

Before talking about the First Ministers (FM) priorities the CSCSJ spoke of how important the third is and how in her previous portfolio she saw first-hand how communities across Wales relied on the support from third sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

CSCSJ explained she believes it is clear the third sector will have a role to play in helping Welsh Government (WG) meet the priorities set out by the FM in reducing NHS waiting lists; support for children in early years; educational excellence in our schools; better, greener jobs; improved transport links across the country.

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Agenda Item 2: a shared vision for our communities

LC-B led agenda item 2 by beginning a conversation on the role the sector could have in supporting WG. LC-B spoke of the pivotal support the sector provides to communities while we are not in business-as-usual situations at currently but explained the sector can bring some solutions if partnership working is applied between the sector and WG.

Andrea Cleaver (AC) representing the Asylum Seekers and Refugees network

Following conversation from TSPC members AC spoke on behalf of TSPC who congratulated the CSCSJ on her new cabinet role and stated how TSPC and the sector are looking forward to working with CSCSJ and wondered if the CSCSJ would be willing to be the sector voice across WG describing CSCSJ as maybe being a 'gladiator' for them. AC spoke of the energy the sector brings in partnership working and offered the support of the sector to the CSCSJ by being able to provide skills, data and insight into what is happening on the ground when creating and delivering services and policies ultimately making a better service for to those who need them.

AC also spoke of the need to be aware of equality and inclusion issues, highlighting an example of volunteering is not always as easy for some people to undertake as others and how policies and services need to ensure these issues have been carefully considered.

CSCSJ noted she had met with LC-B and the chair of WCV, Neil Wooding this week and the focus of their conversation was very much focused on equality and tackling poverty. In relation to volunteering we need to consider how we get

more people into volunteering and particularly how we get younger people involved. CSCSJ explained how LC-B and Neil had some very interesting and new ideas in tackling some of these issues.

Rhian Davies (RD) representing the Disability network

RD spoke of the right to be able to live in housing and said she welcomed the WG commitment on Human Rights. Explaining how this part of the sector felt under attack in relation to decisions being made by UK Government but was grateful for the firm stand made by WG in supporting the needs of those in Wales. RD offered the passionate and committed support of the sector to the CSCSJ by standing with the CSCSJ.

CSCSJ explained she was concerned by some of the messaging she is hearing from the Prime Minister on these issues. How since she has been in post she has been unable to get a UK Minister to meet with her discuss concerns.

Rachel Rowlands (RR) representing Health Social Care and Wellbeing network

RR spoke of the ability of the sector representatives to be able to provide the insight of what is happening on the ground. As well as explaining the implications of being unable to develop innovative solutions and long-term plans whilst receiving short-term funding. Siting the Regional Investment Fund, an aim of which was to stimulate innovation, where decisions are taken at a regional level often result in the sector funding being cut first. Adding, this coupled with short term funding meant services could not be sustained and it was impeding a move to a preventative agenda.

CSCSJ assured TSPC she was in contact with Eluned Morgan, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and funding was an issue raised

throughout these conversations. CSCSJ was also aware of other impacts of short-term funding such as the loss of skills and the impact on employees. We need to get a place where we are not just firefighting, but we are long term planning. CSCSJ referenced the recent consultation on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wales 2024 to 2034. Saying that this was one of the best consultations she had seen as it enabled everyone to engage in its development.

Bethan Webber (BW) representing Enterprise network responded by saying a start to trying to tackle some of those issues just was for third sector to ensure they have a strong relationship with WG officials. The sector needed to be seen as a trusted partner as this would enable all to have open and honest conversations.

Ruth Power (RP) representing the Housing network

RP highlighted the need to demonstrate the value of the sector and how the inter relationships working of third sector organisations creates a vast amount of data. This data could be built on when creating new or renewed schemes/policy. RP explained to get the best out of the sector it is key to involve the sector as early as possible and to embed the sector into any development plans. Referencing the ticking problems with health budgets, RR said the sector were the canaries in the mine as they could raise awareness of emerging issues.

CSCSJ spoke about how the previous Minister for Social Justice had been a strong advocate for the sector. How in conversations in the previous year on budget cuts she had continued to stress the importance of not cutting funding in areas which would in the long-term help to ease pressure on services. CSCSJ will be advocating for Ministerial advice to include how projects and services will help to tackling poverty. Outlining her idea of creating a cabinet sub-committee to look across government at tackling poverty and the impacts of decisions.

Clair Swales (CS) representing regional and local intermediaries

CS raised the importance of how all sectors need to be working together in these difficult times. Particularly as the sector is seeing a shift from support statutory services to the sector. When extra support is provided at a local level the sector it is trickling down to the sector. Without it the sector will be unable to cope with the increase demand on their services.

CSCSJ stressed the importance of ensuring we are all speaking to the right officials at the right level. As well as considering how we can do things differently if they are not working. The one good impact coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic is the increased interaction between officials at all levels and WG Ministers. This leads to more in-depth detailed conversations to allow the right decisions on issues to be made.

Chris Johnes (CJ) representing community network

CJ spoke about some of the work being undertaken by community-based organisations. Highlighting the fragmented approach and interaction between these organisations and WG. The sector believes to achieve the wellbeing goals we need to create a coherence through a community strategy. CJ noted while some teams across WG, like the third sector team, understood the importance of developing a community strategy it appeared fragmented. CJ stated that we all want to achieve the same thing but at times were using different terms. Advocating that this could be achieved by building an understanding across government through a community strategy.

Action: the CSCSJ agreed to speaking to WG officials regarding a Community Strategy.

Helene Hayes (HH) representing the advice and advocacy network

HH noted data collated from her line of work shows 250,000 people are living in a negative budget. These figures show the need to work sooner and better with organisations to try and stop people getting into this financial situation.

CSCSJ thanked all those who had contributed to this conversation. Noting the theme of increased demand on services, some which will be due to unintended consequences of the way we needed to live through COVID-19 pandemic. CSCSJ gave an example of the increased number people now dealing with low confidence. Who found it hard to just leave the house which could reflect why we are seeing 50% absent rates in school attendance. The CSCSJ ended this agenda item by acknowledging the role the sector can play across her priorities of tackling poverty, arts culture and sport and safer communities.

Agenda Item 3: update on TSPC 3 workstreams

‘Volunteering’ work stream, Gretel Leeb, Chair of the Volunteering Cross Sectoral Leadership group

Gretel Leeb (GL) described the setup and aim of the volunteering leadership group and the work being undertaken through the diverse skills of the member and the set of their reference circles. The group have identified short term goals which looks at how we can start to deal with the immediate crisis faced in volunteering. As well as the longer-term goal of developing a new approach to volunteering in Wales. GL also updated on the recent volunteering conferences and encouraged TSPC to members to take part in the survey.

‘Support’ work stream, Phil Fiander, Chair of the TSPC Funding and Compliance sub-committee

Phil Fiander (PF) explained while the current code of practice for funding was good it was not partially user friendly. The sub-committee which includes the WG’s Grants Centre of Excellence as a member, had 5 draft principles (Early and Continuous Dialogue, Valuing and Outcomes, Equity, Flexibility and Appropriate Funding Basis). The committee’s next step is to get feedback from the sector and other stakeholders such as Local Authorities and Health Boards with the aim to get a paper to the CSCSJ by Autumn 2024. At present the principles set out in the Third Scheme only apply to WG Government funding but the aspiration of the committee is for them to be applied to any third sector funding organisation.

‘Relationships’ work stream

LC-B opened the update on the relationship workstream stating while many relationships with WG and the sector is good there is always more to be done to maintain or improve relationships. This is why we are looking to refresh the framework for engagement. Following discussions with the sector it was decided to work in depth with Education as a starting point for this work. LC-B handed over to Kathryn Robson (KR) who has agreed to lead on this work in for this portfolio.

KR (representing Education and Training) stated how important the Third Scheme was to the sector and the need to ensure relationships are strengthened at the right levels. The work involves WG education officials and third sector organisations working in education settings. While working within a portfolio, the work will recognise cross cutting themes which will require cross portfolio working.

Another part of this workstream is focussed on community strategy, and LC-B invited CJ to add any further comments. CJ indicated he had raised his key points under agenda item 2 but reflected on the need for a scheme and framework that works and that can also be adopted with other public bodies.

CSCSJ agreed it was more important than ever to ensure we are not working silos and gave an example from a meeting she attended recently which touch on education and disability. Adding the current financial climate called for us all to work in partnership and she would be an advocate for the sector. CSCJ invited Ameillia John (AJ) to add any comments. AJ, Director of Communities and Social Justice introduced herself to the TSPC and encouraged all members to be in touch with WG officials if they have any specific concerns or points, they would like to discuss.

Iwan Thomas (IT) representing the Community network raised the point of the third sector organisations are often the first point of contacted for when people are in need. With this in mind he likes to refer to the sector as the first sector not the third sector. There may be areas of WG where there needs to be a change in mind set but he was confident if we can work together, we can make a difference.

CSCSJ closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions.

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