

**Third Sector Partnership Council**  
**21 May 2020**  
**Teams Microsoft meeting**

**Meeting Note**

**Attendees:**

Jane Hutt AM – Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW)

Anna Nicholl - WCVA

Ben Lloyd – WCVA

Felicite Walls - WCVA

Fiona Harris - WCVA

Helene Hayes - Independent Advice Providers Forum

Karen Whitfield - Wales Environment Link

Kate Young - Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group

Susie Ventris Field - Welsh Centre for International Affairs

Kate McColgan - Religion

Andrea Cleaver - Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Matthew Williams - Welsh Sport Association

Owen Evans - Children in Wales

Patience Bentu- Ethnic Minorities

Sandy Clubb – Volunteering

Jamie Birt - Employment

Rocio Cifuentes - Ethnic Minorities

Kathryn Robson - Education & Training

Iestyn Wyn - Sexual Orientation

Carl Cooper – Intermediaries

San Leonard – Social Enterprise

Catherine Fookes – Gender

Elin Maher – Welsh Language

**Welsh Government Officials attending:**

Alyson Francis - Deputy Director, Communities Division

Chris Buchan – Head of Communities and Third Sector team

Paul Dear – Communities Division

Aaron Fortt – Third Sector Team

Helen Brown – Third Sector Team

Jenna Pugh – Third Sector Team

**Apologies**

Ruth Marks - Chief Executive, WCVA

Chris Johnes - Building Communities Trust

Gethin Rhys – Religion

Paul Glaze - Youth

Claire Lawson- Animal Welfare

Gareth Coles- Arts, Culture & Heritage

John Puzey -Housing

Victoria Lloyd -Older People

## **Agenda Item 1 - Introduction**

The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW) welcomed all to the meeting and opened by thanking everyone for attending another Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) meeting so quickly after the last TSPC. Throughout the last 3 weeks the DMCW explained how she had been involved in various conversations and meetings with the third sector and recognised the incredible amount of work being undertaken in such a short period. The DMCW believes TSPC is critical to helping Welsh Government understand some of the problems created through this pandemic and is looking forward to also hearing the TSPC networks are responding to these needs.

## **Agenda Item 2 - An update from Welsh Government**

DMCW gave a brief updated regarding her portfolio but wanted this meeting to be focused on understanding where the pressures and priorities of the sector are.

Updates from the DMCW:

- Funding support - a steady stream of applications to both of the main funds that WCVA have helped us set up. There has been a good spread of applications both geographically and thematically but we will be undertaking a more formal review over the coming weeks to see if there are areas we might need to target.
- Voluntary Services Emergency Fund applications total over £6.6million and the Third Sector Resilience Fund applications total over £4.0million.
- DMCW noted that the Welsh Government isn't the only source of funding available to the sector with officials in the Communities Division working closely with other key funders to share information so that together we're able to cover as many of the sector's needs as possible. DMCW had a very encouraging meeting with the Lottery (12 May 2020) in this respect.
- As of 21 May there are now almost 31,000 people registered on Volunteering Wales, with 17,605 registrations since March. While these are incredible figure they don't tell only part of the amazing story of volunteering that's emerging across Wales.
- Officials are working with Local Authorities and CVC chief officers to understand local pictures. We will be keeping a close eye on the potential impacts of furloughed workers returning to work or redeployed Local Authority staff returning to their normal roles. We are also trying to identify where new areas of volunteering demand might come from.

- The DMCW thanked colleagues in CVCs who have been working so positively with key Local Authority and Local Health Board partners to coordinate local efforts.
- DMCW wants to ensure those who are helping others are able to recognise signs of abuse and know how they can safely help, whether that is one of the thousands of volunteers assisting our most vulnerable, support providers, an emergency contractor, postal services workforce, local shops, or supermarket employee. **VAWDASV online learning module is now available to all** to help people spot the signs of domestic abuse, and to know how they can safely access/refer someone to help. This is a free 45 minute module and is available to everyone, in Welsh and English. DMCW shared the link which can be accessed by logging in as a guest with TSPC:

<https://learning2.wales.nhs.uk/course/view.php?id=71>

- During the period from 6 March to the end of April, the Welsh Government's Single Advice Fund helped 7,175 people, which clearly shows the need for support. The most common issues were relating to claims for Universal Credit and other welfare benefits, though providers have reported seeing a higher proportion of people needing advice on employment issues. DMCW will keep a close eye on these trends in order to react to emerging needs.

### **Agenda Item 3 - An update from the sector**

DMCW invited members to provide updates:

**Education & Training** - Kathryn Robson - The crisis has prompted a lot of attention and demand on digital services. There is an appreciation of the extra funding being put into the education sector (£3m) but there are still those at a growing disadvantage because they don't have the resources to access the help. It's appreciated that there's a lot of work going on in this area through WG's digital inclusion framework etc. but the current crisis is escalating the demand.

**Intermediaries** - Carl Cooper - The extra financial support for the Infrastructure (through Third Sector Support Wales) has been critical to allowing them to cope with the increased demand on their services, 3 main observations are:

- There has been an explosion of informal volunteering activity across Wales helping in all manner of ways. As we look to the future how do we continue to harness this community activity that has proven so important (using the SSW act, Social Value and RPBs etc.).
- In terms of formal volunteering CVCs have been recruiting volunteers to support statutory Health and social Care services but placing them in care settings hasn't happened as well as it could, and it would be valuable to explore why.

- We have to use what has happened in the crisis to shift our public and health sector partners' view of volunteering as a resource of last resort, and its lowly position in hierarchy of confidence. How do we ensure volunteering is an ingrained part of our organisational cultures and a key part of our planning processes?

**Ethnic Minorities** - Rocio Cifuentes (RC) – Rocio thanked the DMCW for the amount of time she has invested in BAME issues during the pandemic. There has been an upsurge in activity amongst BAME community groups, but there is a lack of resource and capacity to harness the volunteering effort. Funders are keen to support projects as they understand the disproportionate effect of the crisis on BAME communities. However funders and community groups are disconnected – Rocio is working with WCVA to see what can be done.

**Gender** - Catherine Fookes - Catherine explained that there are currently 3 priority areas of focus - *Protecting women from poverty*, *Ensuring women are safe at home*, and *Ensuring women are safe at work*. She thanked the DMCW for listening to and taking these issues forward.

**Sexual Orientation** - Iestyn Wyn - LGBT individuals are facing greater risks due to isolation and are more likely to suffer with mental health issues – the risks are increased during lockdown as people are forced to isolate with e.g. homophobic family members.

We therefore anticipate a surge in LGBT accessing mental health and homelessness support in the future.

**Welsh Centre for International Affairs** - Susie Ventris Field - The inequalities mentioned that exist in Wales are reflected around the world, and there's a need to maintain international solidarity around them. There is a concern that funding will shift from those small organisations dealing with these issues (which haven't gone away) towards COVID responses.

**DMCW** – the minutes from this TSPC will be shared with Education Minister to raise the issue regarding the barriers to accessing support for the most excluded.

We should be proud of our volunteering infrastructure, but we need to take account of the explosion of activity and not lose the enthusiasm – this will not necessarily need money. During Volunteering week, as well as saying a big thank you, we also need to be highlighting the meaning and value of volunteering. There's a lot here for us to think about capitalising on in the medium and long-term.

There is a need for agents to help those who've never accessed funding before and should be encouraged to speak to their local CVCs who can put them in touch with relevant organisations who can support them.

The DMCW thanked Iestyn, and suggested the possibility of him being involved in the next Strengthening Equality and Advancing Human Rights Steering Group to discuss the issues he raises as they are areas that they haven't engaged on enough (especially from a "young people" standpoint). Reiterating the importance of these hidden inequalities around LGBT and VAWDA issues have to feed into our recovery planning.

The DMCW thanked Catherine for getting the evidence needed in order to make representations to the UK government on non-devolved issues, and explained that WG is working closely with the TUC committee on workplace safety issues. The DMCW made a plea that for evidence on all the issues being raised.

#### **Agenda Item 4 - COVID Recovery and forward planning**

Anna Nicholl gave an update on the Recovery and Forward planning work being undertaken by WCVA to talk to the sector on the emerging priority issues in an open and inclusive way. This work will be generating weekly reports and will culminate in a final report. The work is involving Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales.

The DMCW explained that this work had to be undertaken with equalities and social justice at the forefront of our thinking and that the WFG Act should act as our framework.

Several TSPC members then provided the following updates on the recovery and forward planning work that they are involved with and issues they are facing:

**Wales Environment Link** - Karen Whitfield - Karen welcomed the Counsel General (CG) setting up the Covid Advisory Group, stressing that with this, as with all the elements of future planning, early opportunities for third sector involvement and co-design are crucial. She also feels that the Roadmap to Recovery needs to incorporate climate issues as these issues haven't gone away.

**Ethnic Minorities** - Patience Bentu- Patience raised 2 concerns from her networks that need to be considered in the forward planning process – Turnaround times of funding applications and Core Funding.

**Asylum Seekers & Refugees** - Andrea Cleaver - We need to remain aware and plan for the fact that the major financial impact on the sector might occur in Financial Year 2021-22 as a number of issues compound each other – the majority of funding from large funders is currently going to COVID related work, but we will need to think about the effects that will have for organisations when they fully return to delivering their business as usual work – there be a funding gap from April 2021 compounded by a lack of capacity to apply for funds and a lack of timely decisions by funders (including Welsh Government).

**Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group** - Kate Young - A lot of funding at a local level has been diverted over the past weeks, but at some point the work that was planned pre-covid will need to happen. We need to build on

the new spirit of partnership working and ensure that the third sector is part of those planning discussions for shaping services.

Health and Social Care issues also need to be a key part of the “unlocking our society” document, we also need to pay particular attention to the support systems of our crucial unpaid carers.

### **DMCW response**

The DMCW will be ensuring she is leveraging in third sector interests and contribution in the recovery. The minutes from this TSPC meeting will be passed to the CG and the DMCW will speak to the CG about third sector involvement and representations in the process he has established.

The DMCW explained that with respect to the work WCVA are coordinating that she would like to see a formal response (containing as much evidence as possible) brought together in the next 7-8 weeks.

### **Agenda Item 5 - AOB**

None

The DMCW ended the meeting by reiterating the critical role the sector now have to play, and that we need to build on the positive opportunities that the crisis has cause around volunteering and partnership working

### **Actions**

- TSPC meeting note to be circulated to the Minister for Education and the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition
- TSPC to provide a formal response within the next 6-7 weeks to the DMCW on the work WCVA is co-ordinating on Recovery and Forward planning.