

Third Sector Partnership Council
2 July 2020
Teams Microsoft meeting

Meeting Note

Attendees:

Jane Hutt AM – Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW)
Ruth Marks - Chief Executive, WCVA
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
Derek Walker - Social Enterprise
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
Chris Johnes - Building Communities Trust
Gethin Rhys – Religion
Paul Glaze - Youth
John Puzey -Housing
Victoria Lloyd -Older People

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
Hannah Fisher -
Helen Brown – Third Sector Team
Jenna Pugh – Third Sector Team

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introduction Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW)

DMCW open the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) representatives for attending the third TPSC meeting since lockdown began. The DMCW reiterated that representing the third sector across Welsh Government is a vital part of her work, but also acknowledged the important role Ruth Marks (RM) has been playing in representing the sector outstandingly at a weekly meeting held with other Welsh Government Ministers, Welsh Local Government Association and the Chief Medical Officer.

The DMCW explained that while we are still in the middle of the crisis, the first half of this TSPC meeting provides the opportunity to focus our collective knowledge and experiences on the “Recovery” process and the crucial role the sector has to play in ensuring a just and fair ‘Recovery’. While the second half of the meeting will look at the more current issues the sector is facing as a result of the pandemic.

Agenda Item 2 - Making a Bigger Difference together, Covid 19 recovery -

- a. Impacts and priorities for the sector**
- b. Priorities for working together.**

DMCW introduced agenda item 2 by saying the pandemic had highlighted key issues, weaknesses, assets and opportunities for the sector in Wales which can inform the “recovery” and strategic forward planning for the short, medium and long-term. Forward planning needs to take into consideration how communities will be affected by other issues such as leaving the EU, environmental agendas and also the many Welsh communities that were affected by the recent flooding. This is why moving forward the DMCW wants to continue regular contact with partners such as TSPC who are crucial to helping her and Welsh Government understand what is happening in Welsh communities and in the third sector across Wales.

RM acknowledged the importance of good working relationships with partners and thanked the DMCW and Welsh Government officials for working with the third sector in a collegiate and supportive environment, particularly through this period. RM noted the variety of TSPC representatives provides a diversity of voices that is testament to the diversity of the sector and will help shape how we will move forward positively together, holding on to the silver linings that have developed from these cloudy days.

Anna Nicholl (AN) gave a short presentation: *Covid-19 Recovery: TSPC discussion* covering the following areas:

- COVID impact on Society;
- COVID impact on the voluntary sector;
- Key learning from the crisis
- Possibilities for positive and negative change;
- Planning for how Welsh Government and the sector can making abigger difference together.

DMCW thanked AN for the very useful presentation. In response to the presentation the following issues were expanded on by nominated TSPC representative:

Citizen Engagement and Resilient Communities (Kate Young and Carl Cooper)

While many third sector organisations emphasise is still in the response stage we are now seeing a move into the recovery stage. During the crisis we have sometime had to move to a 'done to' way of working with our communities but we have to avoid this becoming the norm - as we move through the recovery process we need to move to a 'done with' co-productive approach, making use of the sector to ensure "citizen voice" is part of recovery planning.

One of the positives that have come from this pandemic (that we need to retain) is the reduction in bureaucracy, which has allowed organisations to respond quickly to the needs of communities and keep "solutions focussed". We've also seen the profile of the third sector and volunteering being raised.

Moving forward some of the challenges will be about how we re-introduce citizens voices into decision making, and ensure certain voices (e.g. carers) are heard. Cares have always been hard to engage because of the limited free time which has further reduced with this pandemic. Maintaining relationship with Welsh Government and other statutory agencies will be vital to ensuring the voice of the sector is heard – the honesty and open two-way conversation that the sector has had with ministers and Government officials over the past three months must continue.

There are so many incredible stories across Wales of partnership working between sectors. However, this raises the question about what sort of relationship the Welsh Government wants to have with the third sector in the future. While there is good legislation and guidance, which gives the sector a seat around table and encourages co-productive approaches we also have a 'marketised' environment and competitive tender processes that cut across these principles and ensure that the sector is not an equal partner. The Integrated Care Fund is a good example, which has achieved great thing in partnership working with the public sector and the third sector, however, to carry on with this work services are put out to tender. We need to explore whether the 'marketised' model still fits what we want in Wales, or does it undermine the partnership working that COVID has shown us is possible?

Inequalities - (Catherin Fookes and Rhian Davies):

Inequalities have been exacerbated by COVID, and there are specific groups (Women, Disabled, BAME and LGBT+) who have been disproportionately impacted. However, there are positive solutions, if we pursue a just, green and feminist recovery with a "Care, Care, Care" approach. The current situation provides us with the opportunity to emphasise the role of the Equality Act which should be considered in all policy development – ensuring the engagement and involvement in planning and service delivery at all levels (at all levels, including the local). Welsh Government can work with public bodies to ensure this is happening.

Cross Sector working and the economic recovery (Derek Walker):

We've seen a real change during the crisis in terms of understanding what matters to us and what we value. Because of this the sector is seeing much more engagement in its issues than ever before – doors have been opened that have previously been closed. We want “recovery” to look different, so we need a different type of economy and economic narrative, with different types of indicators that are more about wellbeing than GDP. There has been more engagement with the third sector and other sectors with many organisations finding new opportunities to work with new partners. This new way of working must continue in the future – we need bold and different approaches, and Social Partnership legislation will be important.

Chris Johnes

Many communities have found themselves moving from one crisis to another, to help these communities we need to consider how we can work across all sectors together to help these communities, and Welsh Government has a key role in facilitating better relationships.

DMCW

The DMCW thanked Anna for an excellent presentation and for the valuable points made by contributors.

The DMCW reiterated that WFG and Equalities were the key lenses for taking this forward and that the economic sector often has to be reminded of the importance of the third sector and social partnerships.

The DMCW noted that whilst the sector and government will, quite properly, have different perspectives on some of the issues, it is essential now that this work is done as jointly as possible, using a co-productive approach, so that we find common ground.

The DMCW noted that the Council is the natural body to oversee and enable the development of a coordinated approach for effective action, co-produced between the third sector, Welsh Government and other partners. The DMCW felt that the information we now have through everyone's hard work could provide a sound basis for the development of a third sector strategy and action plan for the short, medium and long-term.

The DMCW note that any such plan for third sector recovery will need to acknowledge the severity of the negative impacts while seizing the opportunities and, if possible, safeguarding positive progress that has been made during lockdown, such as improved relations between the public and third sectors in many areas.

The plan will also need to take account of a range of other developments impacting our communities: EU Transition; flooding; trade deals and the risk of widening inequality. It will also need to be flexible: if recent months have taught us anything it is that we cannot be sure what even the near future will bring.

The DMCW thanked everyone for their hard work so far and explained that she appreciate there is a need for some space and time for further discussion, both in this meeting and with your wider networks. However, the DMCW impressed on the council that there also needs to be a sense of urgency to agreeing priorities, timescales and mechanisms for practical action if the sector is going to play the crucial role in recovery, and beyond, that we know it needs to.

Agenda Item 3 - Key Covid related updates from Welsh Government and the Third Sector.

DMCW provided an update on activity around her portfolio responsibilities, these included:

- Funding support has seen a steady stream of applications to both of the main funds, but both funds are starting to see a slowdown of activity in recent weeks.
- Voluntary Services Emergency Fund eligible applications total over £8.5million. Of those approved this has enabled us to support over 4,800 volunteers, benefitting over 335,000 individuals.
- Third Sector Resilience Fund eligible applications total over £4.1million supporting nearly 60 organisations.
- On the 22nd June, the Welsh Government's BAME Covid 19 Socioeconomic subgroup published its report ([Ubele Initiative](#)) into the socioeconomic factors thought to contribute to the high death rate of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales.
- The report makes more than 30 recommendations to address the socio-economic and environmental risks it highlights. The recommendations that have emerged from the themes investigated will be taken forward as part of a Race Equality Action Plan for Wales.
- Welsh Government has announced an additional £1.575 million available to the VAWDASV sector, bringing the total revenue funding for sector in 2020-21 to over £6.8 million.

RM gave a brief update from the sector covering:

The volunteering surge (formal and informal and the increase in mutual aid groups); resilience (and the contrast across protected characteristics); and the difficulties of balancing relationships (particularly across non-devolved areas where two-way dialogue has not been as forthcoming).

RM also reiterated the DMCW's comment around pace of activity and stated that there is a sector commitment to working with WG officials quickly. RM also notes that another TSPC in September/October to update on progress would be helpful.

Agenda Item 4 - AOB

Nick Bates from the Welsh Government's Covid-19 team spoke to TSPC regarding the opening of community centres as part of the easement process.

Kate Young stated that opening up facilities and services will be welcomed as it will ease pressure on people like carers.

DMCW explained that the Welsh Government understands the importance of opening up these spaces, which is why they have already looked at opening faith buildings. The DMCW noted that it is vital that the third sector is involved in the preparations of easement.

This also includes the sector's involvement in Track, Trace and Protect (TTP) process as we consider how we support the ability of the sector to react quickly and be involved in any emergency responses that might arise as a result of local outbreaks and TTP.

TSPC were asked to e-mail the Third Sector Queries mailbox with any further comments with respect to the opening of community centres.

Actions

- Next TSPC meeting to be held in September/October
- TSPC and WG officials to step up a working group to build on the lessons from the Covid-19 crisis and how these can be applied over the short, medium and long-term (including the possible need for a joint statement).