

**Third Sector Partnership Council**  
**30 April 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  
Fiona Harris - WCVA  
Helene Hayes - Independent Advice Providers Forum  
Susannah McWilliam - Independent Advice Providers Forum (sitting in as an observer)  
Chris Johnes - Building Communities Trust  
Karen Whitfield - Wales Environment Link  
Kate Young - Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group  
Susie Ventris Field - Welsh Centre for International Affairs  
Gethin Rhys - Religion  
Andrea Cleaver - Asylum Seekers & Refugees  
Matthew Williams - Welsh Sport Association  
Victoria Lloyd - Older People  
Sean O'Neill - Children in Wales  
Patience Bentu- Ethnic Minorities  
Sandy Clubb – Volunteering  
Jamie Birt - Employment  
Rocio Cifuentes - Ethnic Minorities  
Kathryn Robson - Education & Training  
John Puzey - Housing  
Iestyn Wyn - Sexual Orientation  
Elin Maher - Welsh Language  
Amanda Carr - Intermediaries

**Welsh Government Officials attending:**

Alyson Francis - Deputy Director, Communities Division  
Zenny Saunders – Deputy Director  
Paul Dear – Communities Division  
Chris Buchan – Head of Communities and Third Sector team  
Aaron Fortt – Third Sector Team  
Helen Brown – Third Sector Team

**Apologies**

Paul Glaze - Youth  
Rhys Marged - Welsh Language  
Carl Cooper – Intermediaries  
Lynne Hill – Children and Families  
Claire Lawson – Animal Welfare

Gareth Coles, VAW – Arts, Culture & Heritage  
Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales – Gender

## **Agenda Item 1 - Introduction**

The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW) welcomed all to the meeting and opened by thanking the third sector for the way in which it has mobilised and responded to the needs of communities during the pandemic. The DMCW noted that the sector's infrastructure has been invaluable to our response, and would continue to be throughout the medium and longer term.

The DMCW explained that she was keen to have more frequent meetings with Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) during the crisis to ensure that Welsh Government is aware of the immediate and ongoing issues facing the sector.

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

The DMCW provided an overview of the support which has been put in place within her portfolio. Information on these funding streams can be accessed at <https://gov.wales/volunteering-third-sector-coronavirus>. The DMCW also gave a brief update on volunteering, Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Advice Services and Equalities issues.

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

The DMCW then invited Ruth Marks and TSPC representatives to give an update on the key issues and priorities emerging from the networks they represent.

**Ruth Marks (RM)** - RM thanked the DMCW for the opportunity of the meeting.

**The Main points raised from each TSPC reps are recorded below:**

**Volunteering** - Sandy Clubb - the response from the community to this crisis has been incredible and has brought volunteering into the spotlight. Much work was being done to support organisations requesting volunteers as well as supporting the volunteers themselves. Many of the volunteers were new (or were part of new, small community groups) so they needed support. In order to achieve this it has been crucial to work closely with County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) particularly around areas such as safeguarding. There may be a need to look at how volunteering at home was supported.

**Ethnic Minorities** – Rocio Cifuentes - there has been a disproportionate impact from this crisis on BAME communities. Some of the issues being dealt with were around language issues and the communication of advice and support for BAME communities. There was also an increased demand on those needing help to obtain food. The type of volunteering opportunities have changed and they were trying ensure these needs were met safely. There has been opportunities for funding to support this work.

**DMCW** – We all need to be reaching out to hard to reach groups at this time and not waiting for them to come to us.

**Welsh Language** - Elin Maher - Issues affecting the network included, loneliness, broadband/digital connectivity exclusion. They were redefining how to get in touch with people. The majority of people they were in touch with only get information through the television coverage. There was work currently being undertaken with S4C who have offered help for the third sector to use the channel to advertise their messages.

**DMCW** – noted the minutes would be circulated to other Ministers and noted Elin may want to meet with the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language to discuss this issue.

**Community Organisations** - Chris Johnes - there were still some community facilities remaining open in order to respond to the needs of the community. The type of services being run from these community facilities included, food delivery, mental health help and help with isolation. Independent voluntary organisations providing independent support to their local communities were really proving their worth. While it has been very encouraging to see the innovative ways people have been helping throughout this period it has also highlighted the depth and seriousness of poverty within some of our communities. Chris noted he was preparing a report and would share this.

However, there has been a positive and improving working relationship between local authorities, CVCs and the independent community organisations, with improved levels of coordination and flows of information travelling back and forth. It would be crucial that these improved levels of communication, trust and collaboration between local authorities and community organisations were maintained through the recovery stage (to ensure communities were involved in decisions) and beyond.

**CVCs/Intermediaries** – Amanda Carr – CVCs were providing support to both spontaneous, community and street level volunteering (through advice on issues like governance and safeguarding) as well more formal volunteering pathways with LAs and LHBs. Good working relationships have been established with Local Authorities and CVCs. CVCs have been able to respond spontaneously in supporting with issues around safeguarding, for example when there needed to be cash handing with volunteers. Some of the main areas of activity where CVCs and LAs have been working together include:

- Matching of volunteers with opportunities
- Prescription delivery
- Food security
- Befriending schemes (telephone contact with people)

CVCs were also working with Health Boards on where CVCs could help in the critical care pathway.

There has been a large increase in volunteers and managing expectations has been important- CVCs were keeping in contact with those who have not yet been matched explaining that there would opportunities to match them soon. CVCs have used the

lessons learned from the extra volunteers helping during the floods and have implemented those lessons.

There would be a legacy from the pandemic that we would need to capitalise on. The increase in volunteers and community mobilisation presented an opportunity for “asset based” approaches to be at the forefront of what is done next.

This situation has also brought the opportunity for closer working between the sector the private sector at a local level, which was another potentially positive legacy.

**DMCW** agreed there were important lessons from how the third sector responded to the flooding which would help in planning our recovery from the pandemic.

**Environment** – Karen Whitfield - many organisations and projects had been affected by the flooding and have now been affected by the pandemic. The lockdown measures were having impacts on wildlife and monitoring ability (noting there would be gaps in our data). Where appropriate projects which could safely start back up while adhering to Government guidelines would do so to ease the furloughing of staff. They were seeing increases in wildlife crime and fly tipping. Positive impacts included families using their daily exercise to discover local nature areas and the development of educational resources for children to use while they were studying at home.

**Older People** – Victoria Lloyd - one of the issues the network has been working on was the increased demand for, and dissemination of, advice to older people. Throughout the last couple of weeks Age Cymru, the Welsh Government, CVCs and Volunteering in Wales have worked together to help.

**Ethnic Minorities** - Patience Bentu – although there has been a decrease in hate crimes reported, there may have been a move to online abuse particularly towards the Chinese community.

**DMCW** - the DMCW alerted TSPC that a Welsh Government campaign tackling these issues would be launched shortly and encouraged TSPC to promote this campaign when it is launched.

**Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group** – Kate Young - the immediate issue was funding for the small grass-root organisations providing services as well as the larger ones. Unpaid carers were concerned that the term of “carers” was being used only to describe paid carers and that unpaid carers were being forgotten – we needed to be mindful of the language being used. Whilst many services have been moved to digital at the moment it is important that as the situation changed certain services needed to move back to face to face. It was also key that the sector was connected into conversations about what Red, Amber and Green would look like as the lockdown eased.

**Independent Advice Providers Forum** – Helene Hayes - there had been a spike in demand especially in employment and benefits advice. They were planning for the next steps and expecting the demand on debt advice to increase especially once the payment holidays finished. While services had been switched to online there were

concerns that vulnerable people were not able to access services – the impact of this shift in communications channels would be closely monitored. They had seen an increased need for charity support such as food parcels and the Discretionary Assistance Fund. The support from Welsh Government was welcomed.

**Children in Wales** – Sean O’Neill - pressures and impacts were being felt disproportionately by the most vulnerable children as not every home was a safe home and not every child would have access to digital equipment to be able to keep up with their school studies. This had been evident where schools had seen that some children had not been submitting work. There was a need to ensure that the message that Children’s Services were open as usual was shared.

#### **Agenda Item 4 - Lessons Learnt**

The DMCW noted the recent flooding incidents and the current pandemic have highlighted just how important the third sector was to the resilience of communities in Wales.

The DMCW explained she would like to start a conversation about what the pandemic and the flooding have highlighted with respect to the issues, weaknesses, assets and opportunities for the sector in Wales that could help inform recovery and forward planning for the short, medium and long-term.

**Anna Nicholl** – explained the WCVA had begun the process of capturing key lessons from across the sector and what they meant for future planning (in the short, medium and long-term) if we were to have a strong and resilient third sector in Wales able to respond to shocks like the flooding incidents and coronavirus. This work would be covered in full at the next TSPC meeting in May.

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Leading Wales out of the Pandemic - public and community engagement**

The DCCW explained that the third sector had been crucial to the response to the crisis up to this point and that it would continue to be critical to the recovery – it would be key that the sector was closely involved in planning what happened next.

The DMCW ensured the TSPC were aware of First Minister’s announcement of Welsh Government’s “Leading Wales out of the Coronavirus Pandemic” framework and the need to focus on it, particularly Strand 4 of the framework, which talked about the need to engage with communities throughout the recovery phase.

DMCW indicated she would welcome a formal response from TSPC regarding exiting from lockdown and the implications for the future. Members were also asked to raise awareness of the Council General’s press release and the opportunity to provide feedback via [ourfuturewales@gov.wales](mailto:ourfuturewales@gov.wales) and [cymrueindyfodol@llyw.cymru](mailto:cymrueindyfodol@llyw.cymru). On closing the DMCW thanked TSPC for providing their updates and she looked forward to joining them to discuss more at the next TSPC (May).

## **Agenda Item 6 – AOB**

None

### **Action**

- TSPC meeting note to be circulated to the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Housing and Local Government, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Care.
- Chris Johnes to share report being undertaken by Building Communities Trust at the earliest opportunity.