



Preparing for different futures – final report

CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Approach</u>	1
<u>Participants</u>	4
<u>Overview of the voluntary sector’s experience of Covid-19</u>	5
<u>What has been the impact of Covid-19?</u>	7
<u>Where could this lead to long term change – positive and negative?</u>	12
<u>What are the implications for the sector?</u>	17
<u>What could voluntary organisations, WCVA, government, or other decision-makers do that can help steer us towards a better future?</u>	21
<u>Additional information</u>	24

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected communities across Wales since the first case of Covid-19 was registered in Wales on 28 February 2020. Many voluntary sector organisations were already adapting service provision prior to the UK entering lockdown on 23 March 2020. Since that date, the voluntary sector in Wales has faced many challenges in dealing with the direct and indirect consequences of Coronavirus.

This report summarises the input of people and organisations from the breadth of the voluntary sector in Wales as they adjust to delivering under the longer-term shadow of Coronavirus. Whilst at the time of writing many organisations are responding to the relaxation of lockdown, it is clear that service delivery cannot return to the same models that the sector delivered pre-February 2020. With no vaccination, and the virus still circulating, approaches such as social distancing and shielding will now impact all that voluntary sector organisations seek to achieve.

This is a time of change for the sector – and there are many different futures available to the thousands of organisations within the sector. There is an opportunity for the sector, and the organisations who support and fund it, to identify the future that they aspire to - recognising that Covid-19 has delivered both positive and negative learning. The voluntary sector can work collectively to positively influence the future.

The body of this report seeks to collate key themes and actions that came out of six events. Summaries in relation to each individual event are available in the appendix to the report.

APPROACH

Throughout May and June 2020, WCVA facilitated a programme of online discussion forums to gain an understanding of the issues facing the voluntary sector in Wales as a result of COVID-19, the different future possibilities that are emerging, and how we can best prepare by steering

towards the future outcomes that the sector wants. This builds on the [initial learning](#) that WCVA published in May 2020.

A series of six sessions, each focused on a different topic, ran alongside a wider questionnaire. These were promoted across WCVA's membership and were free to access. Each session focused on a different topic.

- Financial resilience – 14 May 2020
- Building on the community response and volunteering - 21 May 2020
- Delivering services – 28 May 2020
- Influencing policy - 4 June 2020
- Climate change – 11 June 2020
- A wellbeing economy – 18 June 2020

The final four session topics were identified through two votes on social media. The second session was delivered in partnership with WLGA and One Voice Wales and the final session was delivered in partnership with Business in the Community.

Sessions were delivered digitally via Microsoft Teams. Discussions focused on four key questions:

- What has been the impact of COVID-19?
- Where could this lead to long term change – both positive and negative?
- What are the implications for the voluntary sector in Wales?
- What could voluntary organisations, WCVA, government or other decision-makers do that can help steer us towards a better future?

Participants completed a short survey upon registering for each session, and a reflective report was developed for each. A summary of each survey and the sessional reports are contained in the appendices to this

report. The reports and a link to a recording of each session are available on WCVA's website.

These reports seek to establish themes and actions rather than create a summary of what was said. They reflect the survey responses and contributions during the events, rather than WCVA or Richard Newton Consulting's positions. The narratives reflect what people told us and their perceptions of what is happening in the sector. It is also worth noting that the discussion forums took place over a six-week period and attitudes, experiences and the future outlook of participants may vary between sessions.

Alongside the sessions, WCVA conducted an overarching online survey. The results of this are incorporated into this report.

PARTICIPANTS

Each session was attended by between 70 and 110 participants. Overall, 266 unique organisations registered to take part. A list of these organisations is available on request (see [more information](#) below).

The largest representation was from the following:

Area of work	Percentage of registrants
Health and social care	30%
Membership organisations and infrastructure bodies	15%
Community groups	8%
Education and training	6%
Environmental	5%
Housing organisations	4%
Youth organisations	4%

Funders	3%
Parish / community councils	3%

There is limited data on the geographical dispersal of organisations.

The online survey was completed by 21 respondents. 63% of these identified as charities and 21% as voluntary sector organisations. The majority were smaller organisations in terms of their geographical reach with 37% of respondents focused on one local authority and just 21% delivering services across Wales.

Whilst this is a large exercise which informs useful trends, the dataset cannot be viewed as being of a size or sophistication that is fully representative of the voluntary sector across Wales.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19

Before exploring individual themes fully, it is useful to take an overview of the operational impact of Covid-19 on the sector. The sector reports having to quickly (in effect overnight) make sweeping changes to delivery models. The immediate response of the sector varied depending on the type of organisation.

- Frontline emergency response services reported an immediate surge in demand for activity and having to immediately support this through different ways of working. Where this different way of working required access to PPE this was difficult to access in the initial stages of the pandemic.
- Non-essential services were often suspended immediately. In many cases this was followed by significant resource re-allocation / investment in order to modify services to adhere to social distancing, which for the majority meant moving to digital / remote delivery.

- Location-focused services (i.e. community centres, theatres and galleries) had to immediately close and the majority remain closed at the time of writing.
- There were further restrictions to services because of the impact on short-term budgets and fears for medium and longer-term financial sustainability. Organisations saw declining immediate income (predominantly voluntary / traded) and fear reduced government funding in the longer term. These restrictions included placing many employees on the UK Government's furlough scheme under the Job Retention Programme.

It was referenced several times that the move into lockdown was 'easy'. It was mandated, as a public health emergency. The exit from lockdown is harder with organisations having to make their own judgements about risk; uncertainty about timescales; geographical variances across the UK and making sure appropriate safeguarding is in place to reassure service users, volunteers and donors.

Cross-cutting observations

Whilst each event generated its own discussion, there are a number of themes that repeatedly emerged, and which are worth viewing as universal. In particular:

- The voluntary sector is diverse. There is a breadth of factors such as organisational size, governance structure, delivery model, income model and organisational purpose which affect organisational experiences and outlooks.
- Inequalities within the sector and across society have become starker. Most notably, people from BAME communities and disabled people have been disproportionately affected by COVID.
- A move to digital technology has brought benefits (explored later) but also has limitations, including excluding some due to their own digital literacy limitations or wider infrastructure issues linked to broadband capacity.

- People and communities coming together voluntarily to support each other has been at the forefront of the response, demonstrating the power of community-led action.
- Covid-19 is creating short and potentially long-term structural change for the sector. For example, through greater collaboration, mergers, alternative governance models and building capacity for innovation and resilience.
- The pandemic has forced collaboration across the public and voluntary sectors and in a good number of cases this has been effective and has happened quickly than. There is an opportunity to learn from and strengthen these collaborations.
- There is a concern that due to the immediate need of the pandemic that principles of co-production were overlooked. In evaluating changes to services, the sector needs to ensure that citizens are co-designing, co-delivering and co-evaluating sustainable services to meet their needs now, and through the recovery period.
- The financial impact on organisations has been substantial, with the financial future uncertain for many organisations. This is at a time when demand for services is likely to increase given the economic impacts of a recession and the mental and physical implications of tackling COVID.
- Voluntary organisations participating were ambitious for a recovery that takes opportunities to create a better future for the longer term.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF COVID-19?

Sustainable funding

The majority of organisations report challenges to income. Those who are reliant on traded income, events, community and corporate fundraising report the most severe losses; those who are reliant on grant funding have experienced less of a financial crisis in the short term.

Many have accessed government schemes, emergency funding (including that delivered by WCVA on behalf of Welsh Government), though there are feelings that the level of lost funding (which will ultimately lead to service restrictions) has not been replaced by state intervention. Additionally, due to the breadth of governance structures and operational purposes of organisations in the sector, some organisations have faced challenges in accessing some of these funds.

Whilst emergency funding has been available (and prioritised by many funders), those organisations not in the frontline Covid-19 response fear that funding for non-Covid-19 related activities has decreased.

Many organisations fear that whilst they have been able to survive in the short-term, achieving sustainable funding through the mid-term will be challenging given the focus by funders (and finite funds) on the emergency response.

The community response and volunteering

Organisations universally report being astounded by the volume of the community response. In many places this has been organic and hyper-local with local residents supporting their neighbours. The profile of these new volunteers is different to traditional volunteers with agencies reporting how these are of working age rather than retired. This is thought to be part of the impact of residents being furloughed and working from home. There is a wish to sustain this response moving forward.

Where organisations had been reliant on established volunteers, there have been further challenges. If services (e.g. museums and art galleries) remain closed there are concerns about maintaining a long-term engagement with their volunteers. Where services are moving to different delivery models (eg moving of advice services online) there are issues in relation to the capacity (skills, equipment, access to connectivity) of volunteers.

Many existing volunteers have been unavailable given a need to shield, a desire to self-isolate or a lack of capacity to engage with their host organisation remotely. Community Transport providers for example report being particularly affected given their reliance on an older volunteer base; as does the charity retail sector as it prepares to re-open.

Delivering services

As is common throughout all responses, service delivery has in the main moved to socially distanced models, which in the majority of cases means digital / remote delivery, or service suspension. Those services offering a front-line response faced huge peaks in demand which placed pressure on resources and at times necessitated redeployment of staff.

Whilst remote working worked well for those who were familiar with alternative methods of communicating through various platforms, for others it took time to adapt. For older members of our communities not all have access to broadband or are confident to use alternative technology. In response to this, several organisations enhanced and increased their telephone advice and befriending lines.

Swift localised voluntary action has been and continues to be a positive aspect in responding to the needs of communities. Food and medication deliveries were mobilised within days to support those who were unable to leave their homes. This community response was widely reported to be in advance of any policy response.

A focus on Covid-19 support has been to the detriment of access to wider services. There are reports of unusually low levels of demand for (and initially availability of) wider health services or advice services - and fears of unserviceable peaks in demand as lockdown relaxes.

There are greater occurrences of partnership working. Many organisations reported collaborative working with peer organisations at a level which has been previously unprecedented in order to ensure that the vulnerable were protected. Equally, relaxation in data-sharing protocols have contributed to the effectiveness of partnership working.

When reviewing partnership working, participants also recognised how relationships with public sector partners, in particular local authorities, had changed as a result of the pandemic. It was observed how the voluntary sector was agile and responsive in serving community needs and was indispensable in supporting the vulnerable through the pandemic given the way the sector was embedded into many communities.

Influencing policy

In line with wider service delivery, in the initial stages of the pandemic policymakers were focused on Covid-19 related work. This meant that engagement of staff, officials or elected representatives in wider issues was near impossible. This included wider health issues.

Policy work has become very portfolio focused – and cross working between policy areas has become near impossible - i.e. the crossover between social care and substance misuse for a residential rehabilitation service, and Care and Repair services whose operation bridged different portfolios.

Throughout the pandemic, policy has been implemented at speed. Whilst the reasons for this are understood there are concerns that policy has not been fully evaluated and scrutinised, including the embedding of user voice. This has already been felt to regress policy in some areas, in particular the disability sector reports a move away from the social model of disability to the medical model.

The timing has impacted on voluntary organisations' ability to influence policy in the run-up to the Senedd elections 2021. Party manifesto development processes are unclear and previous worked-through proposals are no longer relevant, whilst others need quick development.

Climate change

Climate change and a green economy have been a key priority for a number of organisations within the voluntary sector for some time. The spring 2020 lockdown has highlighted many organisational and individual behaviours, adopted during lockdown, which have the potential to make a positive impact on climate change.

In particular, working from home, developing local supply chains, supporting the growing of local produce and the development of local networks all contribute to reducing climate change. In many cases the community response has utilised the 'Five Ways of Working' as outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation.

However, many activities and behaviours that led to lower carbon emissions were adopted in the context of severe social restrictions that are not desirable in the longer term.

The wellbeing economy

Covid-19 has had many implications on wellbeing. Suspension of many services (health, advice, location-based services) all impact on wellbeing. Beyond this there were concerns that isolation has affected many - not just the traditionally isolated but also those who have been affected by homeworking and shielding. This reaches beyond the older community who are often associated with isolation. In particular, those shielding and caring for young children are felt to be a forgotten group – often engaging in significant care responsibilities with very little support.

The lockdown has highlighted the ways in which our economy drives inequalities and environmentally damaging behaviours. It is having a higher impact on those already struggling to make ends meet.

Government measures around rent and mortgage delays have helped, but organisations are concerned about what happens when those temporary measures end. The lockdown has also forced some changes in line with a wellbeing economy - more flexible working patterns (for

some), working from home releasing more time and reducing emissions and new cohort of people volunteering and involved in community-led action. Any recovery period needs to ensure that people engage with these behaviours in the long term rather than as a result of a crisis response.

WHERE COULD THIS LEAD TO LONG TERM CHANGE – POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE?

Sustainable funding

Reduced funding is unlikely to have many positive long-term changes for those supported by the voluntary sector or those that work in it. It is apparent that the sector is preparing itself for cuts in services, some of which are associated with future redundancies. linked to concerns about mid to long term funding. As organisations plan future years budgets, unless they have significant reserves to deploy, reduced income will require reduced expenditure or even closure or restructure.

In light of this, collaborations and mergers should be encouraged and seen as a positive step for many organisations, rather than have any negative associations. It could encourage more flexible, agile approaches and a focus on building resilience. There have been calls for some of these shifts in behaviours – not least more collaboration, greater involvement of beneficiaries, more use of evidence and demonstrating impact – for many years. There is potential to create a more resilient, albeit financially reduced, sector but the sector needs to be empowered to engage in structural change.

We have seen more flexibility by funders, enabling more community-led solutions to emerge, and a focus on core funding. How funders continue to respond to the sector's needs and self-determined approaches to survival over the coming months and years will be key.

The community response and volunteering

There is broad recognition as to the value of the community response and the desire to harness this volunteer energy. There is a balancing act with many of the new community action groups being un-constituted and a genuine grassroots response to supporting the communities in which people lived. On the one hand their speed, energy and responsiveness are a vital asset, on the other are concerns about safe practice, accountability and longer-term sustainability.

Much of the volunteering took place without brokerage, which was reflective of the grassroots, locally focused response.

Looking forward, there need to be local conversations about scope and purpose of community groups' activity, relationship to other provision and support and guidance needed, so as to enable informal activity to continue safely alongside the more formal services provided by voluntary organisations and public bodies.

In the long term, some of these groups may need a level of funding to sustain. In the immediate past, operational costs have most likely been met through the goodwill of members and the individuals and organisations (including businesses) which they are connected to. Equally, as the urgency of the Covid-19 response lessens, then the motivation of some volunteers may change or decline. There is potential to explore how we can tap into wider motivations to sustain this volunteering base for long-term change.

Volunteer groups have been supported at times by larger organisations including the County Voluntary Councils (CVC) network and Parish / Community Councils. In order to fully understand the size of the volunteer response, closer local relationships are important, including sharing of information so that the extent of the volunteer activity can be impact measured. There is also a need to ensure that there is a parity of support across all areas, recognising for instance that there are a number of areas that are not served by either a Parish or Community Council.

In terms of the established volunteer base prior to the pandemic, there are concerns about how many of these individuals will be able to return to their roles given that many of these volunteers fall into the 'vulnerable' categories when considering Covid-19. This may prevent them returning to location-based / face-to-face roles without significant support / adaptation. There is potential for a decrease in volunteering as the new cohorts cease volunteering once the pandemic and lockdown eases whilst previous volunteers are slow to return to volunteering positions.

Delivering services

Many report that digital delivery has opened up new audiences and made services more accessible. A number of participants highlighted how their catchment areas have extended now their services are being offered online and without any geographic or travel limitations. This is out of line with much of the rest of the Covid response, which has been very place-based.

However, digital delivery cannot fully replace location-based / face-to-face services. There are some who are excluded by their own ability, or by the capacity of their local environment, to access digital services.

Many providers who were able to offer accessibility adaptations for those with access needs in real time environments are struggling to do so in distanced / digital settings. Equally there is concern that digital interactions risk missing some of the subtle signs that there could, for example, be wider safeguarding concerns for an individual. Digital services must not be regarded as a universal value for money solution by commissioners.

Staff wellbeing across the sector has also been affected. Some have had the trauma of being in the frontline response, others are facing burnout due to increased demand for services and / or reduced resources to deliver. In addition, many are finding that their roles, or those of their colleagues, are affected by restructuring or cuts. This all has implications on the long-term ability of the sector to deliver services.

The relationship with public sector commissioners has changed for many organisations, with services being commissioned very quickly and often on the recommendations of the voluntary sector. The sector needs to establish its position as a key stakeholder in the design and delivery of services. There are many examples of lifting of red tape and agile commissioning – the slight relaxation of data sharing protocols was often referenced. This should be retained.

Influencing policy

Throughout the pandemic the voluntary sector has often led the way in service changes, with activities undertaken in communities being adopted in policy after being initially developed as an emergency response. This evidences the sector's ability to influence policy from the bottom-up. It has demonstrated the benefits of the sector's involvement in policy development and collective working with statutory providers.

Beyond this there are some temporary changes to policy that have been implemented as a result of Covid-19 (i.e. the £20 increase to Universal Credit) that the sector needs to identify and campaign to retain. This also applies to seeking to retain the way that the sector is commissioned and the relaxation of red tape that has been upheld by many as a positive. Others will be less beneficial. There needs to be collective work to review the policy changes that have been made during the Covid crisis.

Despite the benefits of the sector's involvement in policy development being demonstrated, there is a danger that it will lack the capacity to engage in redeveloping manifestos and policy proposals in the wake of the pandemic. Financial concerns over the longer term means the sector's capacity to contribute to effective policy development is likely to be weakened over time. With concerns that the pandemic (and the associated economic and social fallout) is not equitable in the way that it affects society, it is critical that the voluntary sector's voice is heard in policy development.

Where organisations have been able to come together to have a stronger collective voice, there has been some success in influencing.

However, the speed of decision-making has led to some top-down approaches that exclude the voices of citizens and the voluntary organisations reflecting their voice. Closed and siloed decision-making needs to be challenged.

Climate change

There is a clear commitment from participants that we need to address the climate crisis and that the way we approach recovery from the Covid crisis provides important opportunities to do so.

There were examples of positive practice and behaviours that would support this. Some were in direct response to the crisis and others ongoing activity that the crisis had shone a light on. As lockdown eases there are opportunities to embed more active travel, reduce and reduce emissions from commuting, with more working from home.

The crisis has highlighted the benefits of existing local community initiatives that could now be grown to provide multiple benefits for wellbeing as well as reducing carbon emissions. For example, community food growing projects are reducing air miles, increasing social connections and helping relieve food poverty.

Tackling the climate crisis (and the nature crisis) is going to demand rapid and significant change. The response to Covid-19 has shown this is possible. There is an opportunity in the recovery to invest in local, community-led enterprises that can rebuild local economies but also reduce or build resilience to climate change.

The wellbeing economy

The required Coronavirus recovery stretches beyond health, into economic and social measures. Welsh Government has set out its commitment to a 'just and green' recovery, and the voluntary sector has a key role to play in this.

The Covid crisis has underlined the value we place on health and wellbeing, human relationships, connected communities and nature. GDP was not (at least initially) the primary concern. The crisis has also highlighted how our pre-Covid economy has driven longer term problems for our society - including the climate crisis, nature crisis, social injustices and inequality.

The Covid crisis has seen a broad and diverse range of voices calling for a shift to different economic models and for this to be embedded in the recovery. This includes Welsh Government, the Future Generations Commissioner and many voluntary organisations and businesses. An example is an emerging Wellbeing Economy Alliance.

Some countries are moving beyond an economy measured by GDP to a wellbeing economy. In Wales, we already have strong foundations in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Future Generations Commissioner. It was thought that many community and voluntary groups understand wellbeing economics and social value better than statutory economic development bodies.

There are existing models that have gained new relevance and new practices in response to the crisis that are showing how this shift can be achieved if scaled-up - for example, local supply chains that can provide benefits for jobs, health and communities.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECTOR?

The sector is facing change at an unprecedented level. Ultimately, its purpose in terms of delivering public benefit remains, as does its commitment of delivering without private profit and with a reliance on voluntary action. Underneath this, there are a range of opportunities and threats that voluntary organisations should be responding to - individually and collectively. This is about making the biggest difference we can for people and communities across Wales. Failure to respond will lead to much diminished capacity or even closure.

Financial resilience and structural change

In the short, medium and longer-term there are significant concerns from the sector in respect of its capacity to secure funds, which fund services and benefits for people and communities across Wales.

This is likely to create structural changes across the sector, especially when combined with different delivery models, motivations, ability to operate with social distancing, changing demand and new groups emerging.

Some of the implications for the sector discussed were:

- Developing a culture of collaboration, sharing learning and support to enable structural change where needed, including mergers. A merger is not to be seen as a sign of organisational failure or weakness.
- Organisations need to invest in adapting to change where possible. This will be hard for many and they are likely to need additional support. We will need to deliver the skills and knowledge need to support a resilient sector.
- Ensuring financial support is targeted where it is needed most.

Volunteer and community-led action

Community action has played a vital role in supporting vulnerable members of communities. Collective action has proved to be a means to trigger community resilience.

There is a 'new' cohort of volunteers with a clear affinity to responding to needs of their community. They may be deterred by too much red tape and reporting. Similarly, informal community-led action has been invaluable because it is highly responsive, operating at speed and embedded in the community. But the lack of formal governance also reduces accountability and increases risks, including around safeguarding. Meanwhile, people who had previously volunteered may face barriers to continued engagement.

Some of the implications for the sector discussed were:

- Organisations who involve volunteers and the volunteering support infrastructure will need to adapt to the new landscape. How can they continue to engage volunteers who need to socially distance and may not be able to continue in previous roles; how can they adapt to enable and engage a new cohort of volunteers; how do we fill the gaps and build infrastructure where communities did not organise spontaneously.
- How do we continue to collaborate and build relationships with statutory and business partners on volunteering and community action?
- Volunteer organisations will need to provide appropriate training and support for new volunteers, and for returning volunteers in different roles.
- Existing infrastructure organisations and relevant networks will need to consider how to build relationships with and support to new informal and community led groups. That includes appropriate governance, without undermining community-led and responsive values. These infrastructure organisations need to consider how they measure the impact of volunteering,
- Ensuring the sector can evidencing the value of the volunteering / community-led response and being a strong voice for sustaining that community-led action.

Service delivery

Service delivery has adapted quickly to the Covid crisis. Some of the changes have been positive, but some negative. Voluntary organisations will now need to consider implications for their own services, but also their role in influencing and co-developing statutory services.

Some of the implications for the sector discussed were:

- There is a risk that changes to the make-up of service delivery, and especially the increased use of digital technology, will exclude some people. Work needs to be undertaken to ensure that no one is / has been excluded in this transition.
- In reviewing changes to service delivery that were imposed as a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions, the sector must ensure that the voice of service users is heard and represented and that no changes to services represent a step backwards in terms of rights or provisions for service users.
- The sector has played an essential role in designing and developing new services and needs to act as a key partner with statutory service provision, reflecting the collective impact that the sector has achieved.

Shaping and delivering long term wellbeing

The sessions discussed the response to Covid in the context of some of the longer-term challenges facing society. The way we respond to the crisis now will affect our future.

Some of the implications for the sector discussed were:

- The crisis has created a once in a generation opportunity for the sector to help shape and deliver a recovery that focuses on people's wellbeing, including a healthy natural environment. This reflects calls for both a green and just recovery.
- The sector needs to ensure that its voice, and the voice of those it represents, are heard across policy and influencing work. This includes non-Covid-19 work and the development of party manifestos for the 2021 Senedd elections.
- The sector has a role to play in ensuring that those that have been disproportionately affected by Covid and those that have become more vulnerable as a result of the pandemic continue to be supported. Community groups at a grassroots level are closer to people than the state and charities across Wales have specific expertise and connections to more vulnerable groups. The

voluntary sector has a vital role in making sure these voices are heard across society and by decision-makers.

- The sector should campaign for positive policy changes to be retained (and negative change to be overturned). This requires collective working to identify these changes and campaigning to retain them

WHAT COULD VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS, WCVA, GOVERNMENT, OR OTHER DECISION-MAKERS DO THAT CAN HELP STEER US TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE?

There are a number of actions emerging for WCVA and members to consider and take forward with other stakeholders in order to ensure that the sector is best placed to access the different future that it wants as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. We have based this section on participants' input but also added ideas on how these could be progressed and who might be best placed to lead without changing the principle. We hope this adds value to participants' proposals.

WCVA / TSSW and other infrastructure bodies

Campaign for the sector's role to be recognised in the immediate recovery and in shaping and delivering longer-term wellbeing. This includes the Welsh Government Recovery Task Force led by the Counsel General.

- i. Build on the core role of the sector in promoting representative citizen voice by adopting approaches that embed citizen engagement alongside collaboration.
- ii. Support organisations to learn and adapt including around digital skills and capacity to ensure these are accessible for all.
- iii. Support for the sector to consider structural change needs to be readily available. This includes changes to governance for new and existing organisations, brokerage on mergers, support with due diligence prior to a merger, and wider professional support for

those changing the structure of their workforce or property portfolio for instance.

- iv. Campaign for funding to be made available that represents the net loss that organisations within the sector are facing.
- v. Work with specialist bodies e.g. Regulatory Bodies to provide timely guidance as the situation changes, for example, clear guidelines about safeguarding volunteers from Covid-19 (including those in shielding / vulnerable groups).
- vi. Facilitate the sector to collectively identify changes to policy / service delivery that it wishes to mainstream – and to collectively campaign for the retention of these.
- vii. Facilitate and connect across the voluntary sector and with other sectors in support of shared ambitions for a green and just recovery

Welsh Government

- i. Voluntary organisations will play a key part in Wales' recovery. There must be structured opportunities for the diversity of the sector to be involved, supported by open, inclusive and participatory approaches. Voluntary organisations should also have a collective voice on the appropriate recovery task forces. This includes the Welsh Government Recovery Task Force led by the Counsel General.
- ii. To recognise the benefits we have seen from greater citizen involvement and community empowerment. In developing future delivery, we need to place citizen voice at the centre of service planning and policy development by embedding tried and tested participatory approaches to citizen engagement such as citizens' assemblies, coproduction approaches and participatory budgeting
- iii. Provide financial assistance to support voluntary organisations to adapt services and operating models to increase their resilience in light of the crisis and respond to net income losses.
- iv. Develop longer-term funding packages.

The voluntary sector

- i. To achieve the desired future through developing practices that address inequality and wellbeing alongside involving a diversity of people in our work.
- ii. Increase digital capacity and skills, adapting services to be delivered remotely where appropriate and / or necessary. Voluntary organisations should campaign for people facing digital inequality and facing greater vulnerability as a result of remote services.
- iii. Voluntary organisations will need to improve their ability to measure and demonstrate impact. There has been much anecdotal evidence presented that needs to be reinforced with evidence-based impact studies. WCVA should explore with organisations such Inspiring Impact and Social Value Wales how to achieve this.

Funders

- i. Wales Funders Forum and other funders should consider how they can respond to the changing financial context for organisations and the need for longer term funding packages.
- ii. Retain flexible approaches developed in response to Covid, with greater emphasis on community and voluntary organisations identifying priorities; alongside support for core funding.

Collaborative working

The Covid response has seen the sector work collaboratively with internal partners, the public sector, business and funders. This needs to be retained and encouraged and is critical to the sector achieving the recovery that it aspires to. Collaborative working will increase the quality of work, enable the measurement of impact, contribute to the wider economic and wellbeing recovery and ensure the sector retains its engagement with communities across Wales.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can read session reports, blogs and watch recordings from each of the subjects discussed at our Preparing for different futures events at wcva.cymru/influencing-a-positive-future.

If you'd like to read a summary of the findings from the Preparing for different futures survey, or see the full list of participating organisations, these are available on request. Please email policy@wcva.cymru.

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