

Annex 3

TSPC Covid Recovery Sub Group

12 October 2020

Chair – Paul Dear - FOCUS Communities Impact of Brexit Project

Attendees:

Patience Bentu – Race Council Cymru

Carl Cooper – Chief Officer Powys CVC

John Rose – Director – National Lottery Community Fund

Chris Johnes - BCT

Ben Lloyd – WCVA

Helen Hayes - Citizens Advice Cymru

Officials:

Chris Buchan

Paul Dear

Aaron Fortt

Jenna Pugh

Liz Hawkin

Apologies:

Claire Bennett - Director of Communities & Tackling Poverty (WG)

Catrin James - Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services

Rebecca Woolley – Citizens Advice

Jessica McQuade - WWF

Welcome

John Rose Director from the National Lottery Community Fund in Wales was welcomed to the group.

Notes/Actions from previous meeting

The chair asked if there were any comments or feedback from the previous meeting. Everyone was content with and the minutes were accepted.

Volunteering Work stream

A detailed discussion was then held around the “volunteering” work stream with respect to the main issues, asks and opportunities. All comments were captured - the following is a summary of the main points raised:

- During the pandemic CVCs and other third sector infrastructure bodies have been bridging the gap between the “system” and “non-system” – how do we make sure that this support of the formal/statutory services is happening in as frictionless a way as possible between the CVCs, LAs and Health Boards at a local level? COVID has seen some of these practical systems being developed but they are not yet well enough enshrined.
- We need to establish good local coordination/partnership working (between 3rd sector, LAs, and LHBs) based around key enablers of sustainable volunteering such as accountability and leadership; strategy, processes and products; resources and partnerships; and effective volunteers and organisers. These should have been in place before the pandemic – we need to make sure they are there for ongoing and future needs.
- We are going to have to differentiate between formal and new and existing informal volunteering and the ways in which we support them – we particularly will need to work out how we support the informal activity without stifling it. Work is already ongoing in this area that we can build on.
- The idea that there is a spectrum of volunteering with informal at one end and formal at the other, rather than either or, statutory / non-statutory distinction (unless referring to statutory services).
This idea can help contextualise the sharing of a variety of good practice around how to meaningfully and effectively use necessary tools such as risk assessments and data protection, safeguarding etc. without being unnecessarily bureaucratic or imposing limitations which are counter-productive to the end goal (ensuring the tools add strength to the service, rather than deplete it.)
- Risk appetite amongst funding organisations and statutory bodies around volunteering (in particular informal) is an issue that needs to be addressed properly.
- For any improvements to be made around volunteering a robust and resilient infrastructure to support it will be necessary.
- The quality of digital support is becoming increasingly important – there are resource and skills issues within the third sector at the moment that need to be addressed if support is to be delivered effectively.
- Some public bodies still don’t trust volunteering as a way to help deliver. We need to better understand what the challenges are, so this can be unpicked and addressed, and examples of good practice can be used to best effect.
- There are parts of government that have started to see the potential importance of volunteering during the pandemic – this momentum needs to be continued. Some key areas for initial focus Youth volunteering (including but not exclusively pathways to employment), volunteering and the environment, equality and justice.

Agreed Action: Based on the Recovery group's discussion WCVA and WG officials will pull together a set of high-level proposals to begin to address the issues and opportunities raised for the Recovery group to consider, comment on, and add to ahead of them being developed in more detail (see below)

High-level draft proposals:

1. Ahead of the next financial year, establish a broad based Volunteering Partnership (cross-sector leadership group) to support and champion volunteering across all the principal sectors, to strengthen leadership and focus, to work collaboratively to identify and set priorities, to lever investment, to inform policy development and delivery, and to foster learning, sharing and innovation.

Working to promote a set of Key Enablers (at a local and national level) to create sustainable volunteering in Wales:

- Accountability and Leadership
- Strategy, Processes and Products
- Resources and partnerships
- Effective volunteers and organisers

In the short term, the leadership group should be tasked with overseeing a substantive review of volunteering in Wales, drawing on what we have learnt through the response to Covid, recent evaluations of volunteer programmes in Wales, other existing evidence available and an open engagement process. This will inform how Welsh Government and others can make substantive improvements to maximise the contribution of volunteering in Wales to a green and just recovery.

The review should consider:

- Local coordination/transitioning – building on the opportunities created by COVID - enabling connections, understanding and integration between key local infrastructure (LAs, CVCs, LHB...) to enable stronger future decision making and delivery around volunteering. Consider potential for volunteers in each sector and how volunteering can become more embedded in working practices. Consider ways of sustaining volunteers, how informal volunteering and the various mutual aid groups, which have emerged through the crisis, can be best supported in the future.
- How volunteering can contribute to a green and just recovery, building on the opportunities and challenges created by Covid-19
 - Increasing citizen wellbeing in the wake of Covid-19, particularly for young people
 - Volunteering and health and social care improvements
 - Volunteering and pathways to employment, particularly for young people.

- Volunteering and the environment.
 - Volunteering – Equality and Justice, including diversity of volunteers.
 - Digital skills and capacity.
2. Ahead of the next financial year, establish an internal cross-government volunteering group to ensure key departments are helping to realise the potential of volunteering within their sphere of influence. With key areas of focus mirroring those of the external leadership group and/or taking advantage of areas currently in policy development stages to build in consideration of volunteering from the beginning.

 3. In the short term, we will seek to maintain the momentum around volunteering by making improvements to our existing Volunteering Wales Grant programme (based on recent evaluation, and including the possible inclusion of a strategic projects funding element). Welsh Government will also establish, in consultation with key stakeholders, a grant pot to enable CVCs, LAs and LHBs to begin the work of local coordination/transitioning – building on the opportunities created by COVID - enabling connections, understanding and integration between key local infrastructure to enable stronger future decision making and delivery around volunteering.

END.