

Voluntary sector meeting with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Wednesday 2 July, 11am-11.45am

Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Welsh Government

- Vaughan Gething
- Julie Morgan
- Clare Jenkins
- Shelley Davies
- Ian Turner
- Matt Jenkins
- Penny Hall
- Matt Jenkins
- Emma Spear

Voluntary sector

- Ruth Marks, WCVA
- David Cook, WCVA
- Ben Lloyd, WCVA
- Sally Rees, WCVA
- Kate Young, All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers
- Debbie Shaffer, Fair Treatment For The Women Of Wales
- Owen Evans, Children in Wales
- Sara Moseley, Mind Cymru
- Matt Williams, Welsh Sports Association
- Sarah Capstick, C3SC

Introductions and welcomes

The Deputy Minister thanked the sector for its invaluable work during the Covid-19 crisis. We are 'invaluable partners'. Working digitally has been fantastic, although not a replacement for face to face work.

Ruth welcomed the letter from Albert Heaney indicating a desire and intention to look at practical ways to continue joint work and dialogue as we move into the recovery phase.

Recovery from the Covid-19 crisis

i) *The sector's role in strategic planning*

Kate commented on the need to consolidate work being done before and during the crisis, to capitalize on positive learning and to take the opportunity to move back to positive models of engagement – we moved from 'doing with' to 'doing to' to respond to the crisis, and this will lead to people's voices not being heard. We need to reconnect with existing processes – working with RPBs, for example.

She noted sector feeling that the Road Map document has health and social care way down the list of areas for guidance for recovery. This could cause the sector to lose the positive momentum and innovation it has developed.

Sara talked about the impact of the crisis on mental health and how inequalities have been exacerbated by the crisis. The sector has been quick and innovative in its response – this needs to continue with creative thinking and working between the voluntary and public sectors. The voluntary sector is public service too.

Owen highlighted the Children's Commissioner report, No Wrong Door. Children in Wales members are concerned about children's mental health and wellbeing, and many are in dialogue with Welsh Government about working at all levels on innovative services to complement the statutory sector.

The Minister said there was still more to do and glad of the recognition of the need to make quick decisions at the start of the crisis. It is positive to hear about conversations with statutory partners in accelerating transformation and that statutory partners are keen to be involved. He wants more engagement and consultation in future and noted the sector was hugely important in the crisis as service deliverers – continuing this will be part of the new normal.

ii) *The Connected Communities Strategy*

Debbie introduced Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales and its work. The sector envisages a demand for its services post-crisis and organisations will need support to cope with this. The paper responding to Welsh Government's Connected Communities Strategy has four asks:

How to measure success – this should not be referrals into the sector, but positive experiences of citizens who have been referred, even though this may be time consuming and challenging.

Who is responsible for measuring success – if the sector, there is a need for robust mechanisms of dialogue between statutory agencies and the sector. The sector will need systems and personnel in place to measure and report, which will need investment.

How to ensure referrals into sector are targeted appropriately – there is concern that statutory agencies may find it easier to refer people to well-known charities as opposed to something local or grassroots, which may be better fit. Worried these pressures could lead to organisations shutting their doors.

The sector will need recognition, assistance and accessible financial backing to continue to play active role in the social prescribing landscape, cope with additional demand and be there consistently to help service users.

Ruth noted that 90% of the sector in Wales receives no public funding.

Sara said what's concerning about the proposals is that it's all about volume, not what's the right thing. This needs to be person-centred – there needs to be assessment of what people need, and the person doing this should be skilled and right for the service user. Then we must make sure we are clear what individuals need and want and are properly supported.

Ruth said the sector is keen to discuss solutions with yourselves or officials.

The Deputy Minister said she was struck by Debbie talking about how we measure success and the importance of measuring by experiences of service users. Welsh Government have tried to do that with the evaluation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Measuring the Mountain project. Could that sort of measurement measure success of the loneliness and isolation strategy? Ruth thinks it could.

The Minister said he is pleased the Deputy Minister pointed to the need to understand impact – can't lose sight of that. He recognized the point about social prescribing and said we have funding streams to support how we want to behave. This isn't easy even in normal times, but it's a challenge we don't want to avoid. He said it would be helpful for the sector to carry on these conversations and work with officials.

Ruth noted the outbreaks in Anglesey, Wrexham and Merthyr Tydfil and said the original grassroots support is still in place. WCVA will talk with officials after the meeting to ensure lines of communication are still clear.

Kate noted that Measuring the Mountain is useful, but we need to remember that a lot of third sector organisations are led by constituents of citizens they represent. These stories are shared with officials. She would like to explore measuring achievement into recovery by people's journeys through the system. We should take the opportunity to work with civil servants on this now as the most meaningful evidence of change.

Ruth noted the importance of sport in wellbeing and the impact elite sports can have in encouraging people to stay safe.

Actions:

WCVA will talk with officials after the meeting to ensure lines of communication between sector and government in Anglesey, Wrexham and Merthyr Tydfil are still clear.

Group to discuss further with officials on how best the civil service and sector can support tracking people's journeys through systems as a measure of success or otherwise.