

Voluntary sector and local government relationships

Background

Relationships between voluntary organisations and their Local Authorities are essential to ensuring that both parties can maximise the wellbeing of communities. By working together, communities can have their voices heard by the Local Authority and can link members of their community with key services. Local Authorities can also ensure that, by working with voluntary organisations, they can engage with citizens through a wider range of means, and ensure services are tailored to communities' needs.

In recognition of the mutual benefit that stems from collaboration between the public and voluntary sectors in Wales, since 1999 there have been a number of initiatives to improve this joint working. These include the Third Sector Scheme, charters between local authorities and the voluntary sector in their area, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and various duties on engagement in local government legislation.

These benefits affect more than just community groups. For example, there are a wide range of health and care organisations, sports groups, etc, where collaboration with Local Authorities can improve community wellbeing. Some large voluntary organisations will want to work with Local Authorities. The Third Sector Partnership Council can help large, medium and small organisations make links with Local Authorities for the benefit of communities. There is now an unique opportunity to strengthen these relationships further, building on the collaboration we have seen during the pandemic.

Current situation

The voluntary sector believes that there are many areas of good practice, where collaboration between the public and voluntary sectors has improved the lives of citizens and the wellbeing of communities. However, both have acknowledged that the implementation of these collaborations has been variable across Wales, and that often culture change is as important as the wider policy framework.

In addition, there are a number of new, regional partnerships which develop policy and deliver services, with which the voluntary sector has different experiences of engagement across the country (for example, Public Service Boards, Regional Partnership Boards, etc).

18 months ago, this group met with the then Housing and Local Government Minister who spoke of her desire to see community engagement and policy making "hardwired" into Welsh governance. The [Third Sector Partnership Council Recovery Sub-Group Report](#) outlines a series of recommendations about how to begin this hardwiring process. Welsh Government and Wales Council for Voluntary Action has begun the process to implement

these across all levels of Welsh Government's work, and will report back to this group throughout. This aims to include the voluntary sector, public sector, and private sector.

Asks:

We are calling on the Minister to support the Third Sector Partnership Council workstream on strengthening relationships between voluntary organisations and local authorities and regional bodies. A TSPC working group is being established to lead this work. We ask that the Minister's officials support this, bringing together discussions into one workstream.

The Voluntary Sector and Local Government Planning Group

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