



Cross-Party Groups

A RESPONSE FROM WCVA

1. [Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#) (WCVA) is the national membership body for voluntary organisations in Wales. Our purpose is to enable voluntary organisations to make a bigger difference together.
2. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Standards of Conduct Committee's consultation on Cross-Party groups.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CROSS-PARTY GROUPS IN THE SENEDD?

3. Cross-Party Groups can and should be a valuable forum for sharing expert insight and having informed cross-party, cross-sector debate on key issues, giving those attending an opportunity to influence the thinking of Members of the Senedd. In the best cases, they are exactly that.
4. We have heard reports of voluntary sector organisations having some problems with CPGs, as discussed below. However, others have said they have no issues at all with current arrangements. This leads us to believe there is no inherent problem with CPGs across the board; rather there is simply a need for more consistency in arrangements. This would allow all CPGs to work effectively.

HAVE YOU ANY CONCERNS OR ENCOUNTERED ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS? IF SO, WHAT?

5. It would be useful if CPG Secretariats (which often includes voluntary sector organisations) were given a little more autonomy from CPG Chairs. Currently, all arrangements – for example, approving memberships or booking meeting rooms and IT – must be made through the Chair's office. In many cases, this works acceptably. However, we have also heard reports of Chairs taking a long time to make decisions and get back to Secretariats giving them permission to go ahead with the next stage of organisation. This then becomes frustrating and dispiriting for the Secretariat. It would be helpful if Secretariats were able to organise affairs independently, with perhaps only a final sign-off from the Chair to approve actions.
6. There is little consistency in making links between CPGs at present. This potentially results in duplication of effort and missed opportunities for sharing of ideas.
7. There are some CPG pages on the Senedd website that are out of date, listing members who are no longer in the Senedd or giving the wrong secretariat

information.

DO THE CURRENT RULES REFLECT THE FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CROSS-PARTY GROUPS AS YOU UNDERSTAND THEM?

8. It is not clear to the voluntary sector, including some of those that actually sit on these groups, what the exact function of CPGs is intended to be. Some have expected CPGs to act essentially as sub-committees. A steer from the Senedd Committee about what exactly they would like CPGs to do and achieve would be invaluable. This statement should be communicated clearly to all CPG members and displayed on the Senedd website. This will help get CPGs the right membership and ensure that members have the correct expectations of their role.
9. With reference to the above point, we have heard reports of members sitting on these groups without the necessary expert knowledge to fully play a role effectively. This is not necessarily the fault of the members in questions, but rather one or both of the following:
 - Formless Standing Orders that do not effectively communicate the structure and procedures of a group
 - a failure in communication between the member and the CPG about the purpose of the CPG and what would be expected of the member

These members may have put considerable resource into preparing for these group meetings. Clarity as the role of CPGs would prevent such wasted effort.

ARE THERE ANY FURTHER STEPS THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO INCREASE TRANSPARENCY FOR CROSS-PARTY GROUPS? IF SO, WHAT?

10. Minutes of meetings should continue to be published on the Senedd website in a timely manner.
11. We have noticed that there are no minutes published for a number of CPGs – for example, those on the Clean Air Act and Faith CPGs. If there have not been meetings of these particular CPGs, and therefore no minutes produced, this should be stated. If there have been meetings, these minutes should be published as soon as possible.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

12. WCVA will be happy to meet with Committee members, Senedd officials or Members of the Senedd to discuss the issues raised above if requested.

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