

## Chapter 4: Engagement

### Question 9: Do you agree with the proposals for development of the TSPC network and meeting structure?

#### Engagement

- How do the engagement mechanisms reflect – Programme for Government and Tackling Poverty agenda and actions
- Huge gap between WG rhetoric and reality. WG is so remote from the community and community organisations its recent interventions for example community first are damaging true community based action
- How does WG know what voluntary organisations need? How can they discuss support mechanisms if they don't understand voluntary and community organisations needs
- If you want to maintain healthy relationship with third sector – bear us in mind when you are imposing initiatives. Ensure our involvement – insist on local authorities working in partnership with third sector
- If Huw Lewis wants resilient communities WG should stop being so top down and really engage with groups working in the community or delivering services to the most vulnerable
- Engagement does not reach all third sector organisations – meetings dominated by large interests
- How will local groups engage - lots more meetings as there is no interest in regional focus that is on local. They need to focus on doing not taking up time in meetings
- Use new technology to facilitate engagement – google groups, blackboard
- Use skype, video conferencing for TSPC etc
- TSPC video conferencing? – save money

#### TSPC meeting

- Strategic leadership group – need to avoid perception of exclusivity
- Meetings should be held in different locations – increase access, enable Welsh Government to see what really happens
- Are TSPC's the right thing anyway?
- Should the TSPC's purpose be;
  - From Ministers to provide brought policy etc. direction to the third sector
  - For the third sector to respond and prepare alternatives (would require pre-planning and preparation)
- Does the TSPC duplicate the work of the WCVA?
- Need to be clear about purpose, clear about communication and clear about roles and responsibilities
- An overarching TSPC would be good as a networking vehicle with smaller more focussed regional groups which meet more often dealing with the core issues
- Should be 2 half days a year. Need Ministerial commitment to the sector

- The TSPC is a bi annual one hour meeting; does that show a value for the third sector?
- Acknowledgement that TSPC meeting can be improved – how big? How complex?
- Wording an issue – surely if Welsh Government committed to working with the third sector then two TSPC half day meetings must be sustainable?
- What is the outcome of TSPC? Does it produce results?
- What change does TSPC bring out? Is it necessary?
- Effectiveness? What major change/policy shift has been achieved by TSPC?
- Need to strengthen cross cutting themes at TSPC – which can't be picked up at narrow portfolio meetings.
- Need a clear purpose and programme for TSPC? What is the point/outcome?
- Do you need a partnership council at all?
- One hour meeting isn't long enough. More time needed to explore issues with officials, then Minister to attend for a focused part of the meeting
- Is a meeting the best way to achieve objective (TSPC)? Has it got clear terms of reference or is it just going through the motions? What is the outcome?
- What do TSPC meetings achieve? What are the outcomes?
- Idea to have longer TSPC meetings – part chaired by Minister, part not. How do you prioritise what Minister leads on? Priorities on ministerial bit then officials could look in more detail
- TSPC need clear terms of reference – agenda items to focus on sector-wide issues
- What does Welsh Government bring to the TSPC?
- Evaluation of TSPC
- TSPC does not work now as they are filled full of organisations who are there to serve themselves
- Welsh Government and sector for TSPC. Other meetings for 'themed' issues?
- Structure need to change. New one could work better if those who attend truly represent third sector organisations views
- Like the idea o 'hour with Minister' and 'more discussions' with officers – TSPC
- How do you get a common agenda for TSPC?
- TSPC national/regional event
- Need to keep commitment to at least twice a year for TSPC – otherwise connection lost
- Welsh Government officials? More meetings what would be achieved, good at avoiding answers
- Is there sufficient resources for Welsh Government officials to spend more time
- Much more frequent meetings with officers to develop proposals

- TSPC should focus on cross cutting issues not affect 'third sector' rather than individual policy areas
- Meetings to focus on strategic issues

### Networks, Participation and Representation

- Can we be informed about the £5000 bursary re network meetings? Who is eligible for this funding and how do you claim?
- Need more involvement – very select. Not representing interests
- Don't want to lose local voice
- Who are members of the TSPC? How do they feedback to wider sector?
- How to participate in the Partnership Council as I have numerous contacts and feeds but never invited?
- Children and Young People need to get a say directly – not just a network representing their voices – How do they get a say? Article 12 – The right to have a say. UNCRC Children and Young People on the TSPC. Remember the Children and Young People's Right (2012) Measure
- Look at what support mechanisms need to be put in place to involve children and young people
- Service user voice at TSPC meetings
- Varying degrees of commitment by representatives?
- WCVA/CVCs/national networks
  - What about other organisations?
  - What about social enterprises?
  - What about other service users?
- Representation a big issue – assume that national body (e.g. Disability Wales) is representative but it is not. Huge issue – communication with smaller groups
- Access to services and transport aren't on 25 networks
- National networks are not always representative. Local networks need to feed in
- How representative of the Third Sector is the TSPC?
- Also, representation of sectors is not transparent
- Advice is not advocacy – need proper representation e.g. parents advocate network
- Just because social enterprise sits with Edwina Hart, it doesn't mean it is ok to sideline it. Any representation of the Third Sector must always include social enterprise, co-op and mutual's
- It's a fine line between social enterprise and community resilience (in Wales 2013)
- Ordinary voluntary organisations are not full members of WCVA – only associate members – no vote at AGM. How can they speak for local voluntary and community organisations
- As the representative of a community based organisation I can say that we feel less like a 'partner' with the WG than at anytime in last ten years
- At least half of TSOs are not CVC members – how do they feed in?
- Be wary of tokenistic representation

- The TSPC does not hear from voluntary organisations on the ground. We are voiceless at WG level
- Institute of fundraising is not represented and should be as integral to third sector
- Grass roots organisations should be given the chance to be represented on the TSPC
- Where is the correct and appropriate representation of Mental Health organisations in the TSPC
- 'Knowing about it' – third sector so many lists – we hear from WCVA (newsletters etc.) – we hear from Welsh Government. Tell us who are our representatives, how to contact them and what agenda is we can men feed information portal or something e.g programme monitoring committee model for RDP
- Regional CVC representatives on TSPC to enhance the local voice
- Difficult to get 'local' third sector voice into TSPC/Ministerial meetings
- Representation – a lot of pre-work/post-work

### Feedback

- Feedback to members – how? Is it effective? Timing/format?
- Are TSPC meetings getting through to people?
- Better communication and awareness of events and meetings – radio and press
- Feedback mechanisms from TSPC – through CVCs
- Feedback from TSPC
  - national networks don't feedback to sector, need more ways to feed in
  - this isn't just infrastructure
  - umbrella bodies are not infrastructure (e.g. C.I.W)
- Recognise confusion: people assuming WCVA or CVC's not communicating when networks are led by other national organisations not infrastructure. Consultation document is misleading.
- Communication between national representatives and wider sector is not good
- Communicate out to all third sector organisations how they can feedback and to whom. Need to understand the mechanics of how to contact local representatives views/suggestions
- Everyone is relying on WCVA to feedback because network representatives do not
- Need more feedback/forward between the sector and the TSPC members.

### Accountability

- Issue around accountability and who feeds back
- The Third sector and WG are not equal partners – WG has the power and WG uses it. To have a true partnership you must give up some power
- Need evidence that TSPC networks are consulting with their sectors

- Organisations want evidence of action taken at TSPC and evidence that engagement has taken place
- Risk and accountability – if regional, who is managing ‘actions’ and who/how feeding back into TSPC?
- Accountability – TSPC must be accountable back to the sector
- TSPC should include requirement for TSPC members to promote and share information about the group

### Regional dimension

- Don't create another 6 new networks – it's diluting your efforts
- TSPC meetings are always in Cardiff - smaller regional meetings might be better for access
- Regional meetings can bring local information. What happened to old regional meetings at CVC level?
- Regularly responding to documents – lots of engagement but very small funding. Worthwhile to campaign on behalf of community and social justice.
- Agenda items on other local meetings – e.g. TSPC feed through and Ministerial meetings on other agendas (overarching strategic third sector forum in NPT)
- Regional representation
  - What is the regional footprint? Education/jobs/health and social care/simpson?
  - Who would represent the region?
  - How would they differ in their representative role? Duplicating?
- Engage more with regional meetings – help more involvement with regional organisations, they need to be involved
- TSPC meetings should take place in each of the 6 regions
- CVCs/WCVA involvement in regional working – police/transport/health/simpson – what do we mean by regional?
- Regional meetings and national meetings – not either but both
- No reference to region next door – not working together. Regional working
- CVC;
  - Local groups
  - Local people
  - Local government
- Regional – is this the right level?
- WCVA – national groups, Welsh Government
- Relevance of content of regional meetings – specific themes, influencing agenda
- Which region? Education/health?
- Could networks be regionalised? And feed in to full TSPC?
- Regional TSPC structures regarding regional boundaries – local authorities, health boards, police crime communities – all different
- How does adding a regional layer add to the two way communication between the sector and the Minister?

- Regional working
  - Another tier of TSPC meetings
  - Capacity to engage
  - What do you stop doing?
  
- Distinction between TSPC, sector-wide issues versus theme/portfolio subject area issues where Ministerial meetings required
- Needs to more 'visible'
- Need more resources for Welsh Government
- Difficulty of relating to sector networks, difficulty consulting
- Need to develop support structure of TSPC to ensure accommodation, representation and \_\_\_\_\_ for the wider third sector
- I'm just a small local registered charity. I didn't know there was a TSPC. I would use the local CVC or WCVA for help with issues
- Need a steer on what third sector is to deliver and what is not going to deliver in light of budget cuts
- Need to keep subject areas and themes – otherwise you lose passion, lose interest and dilute issues
- Thematic and regional issues/ proposals to be fed back on national level
- Capacity (work nationally or locally but often not regionally)
- National and local need to work together
- Using existing mechanisms e.g. local CVC networks and forums (CYP/HSC/transport/learning and skills) – how do we join up and get input from specialist organisations
- Depends who funds posts as to which forum you can link to and need to keep it local and the day job – not say regional/national interests
- Better access to the Minister – TSPC representation of smaller organisations – network representatives need to evidence their engagement with organisations
- Smaller organisations cannot get their issues on the agenda
- Feels 'top down' – how can it change to enable 'ground up'?

**Question 10: The suggested framework for TSPC Work stream activity seeks to increase the effectiveness of the contribution of the Work streams. Do you have other suggestions to add to or improve the proposal?**

Membership / design of Workstreams

- Who decided on the work streams? Third sector equal partner – needs to be involved in decision
- Link up workforce and skills work stream
- Balance of ownership of work streams – Welsh Government and Third Sector
- Co-opt in members to work streams for expert knowledge
- Relevance of work streams to sector and Welsh Government
- Public services workforce
  - volunteers entering social work workforce
  - critical role for volunteers – pathway/route
- Smaller organisations are more interested in engaging with the work stream areas of working. Think about technology – see blackboard programme, Universities use it
- Work streams – task, finish groups. Are they the right streams?
- Task and finish needed to pull together expertise from local groups with officials
- Need work streams which are ‘task & finish’ which come out of the TSPC as a direction and respond to the next one
- Terms of reference are key to ensure the value in meeting and what is discussed

New ways of engaging via Workstreams

- Use technology to capture the items which need to be on agenda for TSPC
- More work streams, more resources for representatives to be able to attend/participate
- TSPC – third sector reports ‘censored’ by civil servants
- Greater use of technology to engage. But third sector not necessarily equipped to do so
- Resource needs to be made available to improve how third sector organisations can access the information stream to allow their voices to be heard

**Question 11: Do you agree that the existing biannual cross-portfolio Ministerial meetings should be replaced by a more flexible pattern of meetings with Ministers which focus on timely and specific issues of mutual interest/concern?**

Biannual meetings

- Key to retain Ministerial meetings
- Must retain Ministerial meetings
- Don't lose the meetings with Ministers
- Need to have more frequent meetings with better informed issues
- More flexible pattern of meetings
- 2 meetings needed to gain important strategic overview
- Don't want to lose access to Welsh Ministers
- Prescribed 2 meetings per year better than no meetings per year
- Flexibility of meetings, yes- but commitment to at least 2 per year
- Minister meetings to be continued, they are both important and offer very good access
- Safeguard the 2 meetings is important to retain the point of access for representation and engagement on both sides – ad hoc meetings can be added
- Bi annual meeting with minister could be linked to the work streams and more immediate with portfolio areas
- Shows lack of interest in sector if Ministers won't meet sector. Need a minimum of 2 meetings per year and be flexible
- Need to keep Ministerial meetings. If they're ad hoc – how can we guarantee that they will take place – busy ministerial schedule
- Good idea focus on timely versus specific

Issues raised

- Too short a time with Minister (previous) – huge portfolio
- Meetings with Ministers (biannual) are too broad, needs more focused meetings of fewer attendees
- Meetings with TSPC should not replace separate meetings with policy Ministers
- Risk of dilution of Ministerial contact and engagement
- 30 people in one meeting for 1 hour is not an effect. Prefer longer time with period to prepare and then 1 hour question and answer with minister. Not an address – Q&A
- More regular meetings with Minister needed – more responsive to changing needs less of a tick box exercise
- Shows lack of interest in sector if Ministers won't meet sector. Need a minimum of 2 meetings per year and be flexible
- Sometimes the minister refuses to discuss issues of particular interest to sector
- Prescribed 2 meetings per year better than no meetings per year



- Meetings with TSPC should not replace separate meetings with policy Ministers
- Minister meetings to be continued, they are both important and offer very good access
- If there's a real purpose to the meetings in giving direction, briefing, development of concrete proposals etc., keep them as they are. If they are general, give them focus
- Para 4.19 – where is the evidence to say that the Ministerial meetings are unsustainable
- Not enough awareness of Ministerial meeting, people would like a chance to be involved – get support from CVC with forum
- Those that meet/see minister outside of biannuals are well connected /already have a voice etc. – with biannual meetings there is an opportunity for everyone
- Shows lack of interest in sector if Ministers won't meet sector. Need a minimum of 2 meetings per year and be flexible
- Need clarity on the pathway to feed information up to this third sector partnership. How small 'grass roots' local charities can have any voice? Broad brushstroke third sector meetings cannot get to any detail, the sector is diverse

#### Questions raised

- Ministers are responsive outside of this structure – is the structure adding value? Sectors are a bit artificial e.g. 25 networks – some people involved across 7/8 meetings/portfolios. Topic based it more relevant
- If you drop Ministerial meetings could you lose the two hours a year with the Minister?
- How do you ensure relevance to the Third Sector and Welsh Government?
- Ministerial meetings – how do we avoid dominating particular parts of the agenda? – principle of prioritising issues and themes is a good idea for biannual meetings

#### Ideas

- New way for Ministerial engagement
  - speed dating
  - Issue based discussion or workshop to draw out problems to put forward hot topics
- Ministerial meetings organised on 'regional basis'
- More engagement with officials might help with issues
- Timing and appropriateness is critical. Can link more closely to any legislation being introduced. Sometimes opportunities are missed to engage on the precautions of legislation
- Range of mechanism required for engagement
- Range of options to engage (consider technology)

- Listen
- Yes additional meetings
- Additional – engagement e.g. more engagement/meetings not less
- Schedule of agreed strategic issues for discussion – need relevant minutes to be present for discussion
- Need for regular diarised meetings with pre agreed discussions agendas (based around strategic issues)
- Increasing influence of third sector: in environment of cuts
- There needs to be a focus on strategic issues, enable wider communication and opportunities to identify solutions
- Local third sector vote all Ministerial meetings
- Yes, more regional and local governance
- Third sector Ministerial meetings/work programme should be concerned with how to have a thriving third sector including: infrastructure, skills/capacity, funding, risks to third sector processes for involvement etc. Topic/outcome related issues e.g. contribution to programme for Wales outcomes is a different area that needs to be addressed alongside the wider public service contribution
- Needs to be more flexible and more focussed agenda. Also twice a year isn't enough
- Key person or organisation to act as conduit to the Ministerial meetings and from the meetings
- Engagement with smaller organisations with ministers without an interface
- Engagement must stem from what we want to achieve first and then develop a range of mechanisms to achieve that

### Other comments made

- Help voluntary organisations to help themselves, provide funding to support groups to develop enterprise fund this by cutting, number of advisors in WCVA and national infrastructure organisations
- Don't forget the whole point to this exercise should be to support voluntary organisations delivering in communities. All this debate on infrastructure is in danger of overlooking the reality of delivering services on the ground
- Be honest, this is about cutting funding to CVCs. WCVA not about the needs/role of voluntary and community organisations in Wales
- "Pillage of the weak by the strong" – this is happening. How will this review impact on this? Fiddling at the edges to save money will not do it
- Cut WG spending on bureaucracy and divert it to the voluntary and community organisations to make them more sustainable. Only way to target most vulnerable
- This document appears to miss the point of who will suffer as a result of the cuts. Seems WCVA and CVCs will receive cuts.
- WCVA – could be shrunk and no major issues noticed – but CVCs are vital to grass roots support
- CVCs will be your closest link with work on the ground – use them
- Remember if you procure a service from the sector it is at greatest cost to the sector – who pays? What is not done while we pay?
- Is the Ministers message being delivered to LA's too? They are currently working to 'job presentation' and not necessarily best for their communities – how can you influence this?
- Did the consultation come from the TSPC?
- Need to consider third sector 'proofing' across top departments to free up funds/engage third sector organisations instead of consultants savings – regional third sector team
- Civil servants inform ministers – civil servants are not informed by the third sector
- Welsh Government need training with payments/grants and need good governance themselves