

Scottish Third sector Research Forum - meeting 3 2010-11

Third Sector Research Forum -Quarterly Meeting

26 January 2011 10.30am- 12.30pm, Conference Room A, St Andrews House

In attendance:

Geoff Pope, SG (Chair)

Kay Barclay, SG (Minutes)

Pat Armstrong, ACOSVO

Kathy Cameron, COSLA

Dee Fraser, ESS

Louise Meikleham, OSCR

Stephen Osborne, University of Edinburgh

Fiona Robb, HiE

Ruchir Shah, SCVO

Sandy Watson, SE

Apologies:

Linda Boyes, ACOSVO

Helen Harper, VDS

Gerry Higgins, CEiS

Linda Keeney, COSLA

Carolyn Sawers, Big Lottery

Antonia Swinson, SSEC

1) Introduction

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Membership updates - Helen Harper has returned to represent Volunteer Development Scotland; Carolyn Sawers is replacing Jackie Killeen from the Big Lottery. However neither were able to attend today.

Pat Armstrong was standing in for Linda Boyes. Linda Keeney and Kathy Cameron from COSLA are rotating representation.

2) Evaluation of the research forum (facilitated by Dee Fraser, ESS)

Dee Fraser from ESS facilitated a review of the forum. The primary aims of this were to clarify our joint objectives and establish what we wish to achieve as a forum, and if possible identify ways of having greater impact. Geoff introduced the discussion noting that the Forum's remit would be reviewed in spring and this review would feed in; SG has used the forum as a sounding board but see it as a shared resource to improve knowledge.

Participants divided into groups to discuss around three themes: purpose of the forum/ why are here; what the forum does (and is this right/appropriate?) and what do we need to change. A written summary of what was discussed is attached to the minutes.

Some key points:

-Forum works best when we are working together on a shared theme or issue

Key changes to be made to the process (and remit) were proposed as:

- Spend less time on updates in meetings (with some advance preparation to enable items to be bundled)- In future members to provide updates in bullet point form to Kay 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.
- Have more thematic discussions
- Have four meetings a year (not three) to maintain momentum
- Rotate venues (next one at OSCR in Dundee? See end for suggested dates)s

3) Scottish Government updates (Kay Barclay, Scottish Government)

· Third Sector Quantitative Data Work

o SG to convene another meeting of the sub-group in March/ April; would be useful to discuss SCVO Panel survey data and other data in greater detail; important to be clear about sources of data being used and fitness for purpose.

o John Mohan (C-Gap and TSRC) is reviewing data sources around the UK including OSCR data and so expect his findings to be very useful

Action - Kay to organise a meeting with the Quant data sub group

Action - Kay to liaise with John Mohan to access his findings

Update - John not available for a March meeting but will be in Scotland in May; Kay will have a teleconference with John in Feb/March and follow up in May in person.

· Third Sector National Indicator work

o In order to overcome the issues around defining the third sector we will cross match the whole OSCR list in the first instance and separate out data for certain categories of organisations that are not targets of government policy. This will help to ascertain the degree of impact that such categories of organisation have on the figures.

o SG is waiting feedback from OCEA on progress piloting the cross matching exercise using the draft third sector database. There appears to be a delay with the software. **Action point: Kay to chase up**

· **Third Sector Longitudinal Study** (Stephen Osborne)
The final report is due to be published on 16th February

Update- published on 24th Feb.

The key findings were outlined:

- The third sector has particular expertise to reach into disadvantage and vulnerable groups
- TSOs note the challenge of localism working across multiple LA areas and there is hope that the new interface infrastructure will help to overcome these
- Concerns about funding especially cost prioritised over quality
- Increased dialogue between TSOs and LAs is evident
- Shift in agenda eg toward employability
- Performance Management - feedback on this
- Partnership- some evidence of successful partnership working
- Particular challenges in rural areas

4) Selected members' updates

ACOSVO are conducting a project with Learning Teaching Scotland on the theme of leadership in partnership working with the aim of supporting third sector organisations, Community Learning and Development organisations and Head Teachers working together. The project will conduct a mapping exercise of existing leadership opportunities followed by an audit of needs and development of relevant training/production of materials as a pilot. Its end product will be a launch of the programme.

Evaluation Support Scotland (Dee Fraser) have done some work with small community groups which has fed back to impact policy development.

Propose to include the ESS work in the next agenda along with a update to the remit based on the findings from the evaluation.

12:20 AOB and date of next meeting (proposed April/ May to be held as OSCR in Dundee - tbc)

12:30 -13:30 Networking Lunch

Appendix A:

Third Sector Research Forum Review (Dee Fraser, ESS)

Notes of the discussion

26th January 2011

The forum discussed its work under three broad questions:

- Why do you come to the forum?
- What should the forum do (and not do) to better understand the contribution the Third Sector makes?
- What needs to change/stay the same with the way the forum works to help us do this?
- **Why we come to the forum**

Forum members come to the meetings to:

- Share information.
- Share data.
- Share research programmes/projects early in the process.
- Make links and be signposted to other data/researchers and projects that could support own research.
- Access best practice and expertise for own research (particularly organisations that don't have much research capacity.)
- Identify the research and evidence gaps in the sector.
- Be signposted to other research (outwith the forum membership) that is relevant.
- **What the forum should do**

Where in the research process?

- Be involved **very early** in the research process to encourage joint working. By the time research is underway there's no 'way in' for organisations.
- **Identify gaps** in the research.
- **Influence** research priorities.
- **Be a conduit** to get research to the right people/organisations.

- **Dissemination-** collectively disseminate pieces of research.

Utilisation

- **Have oversight** of knowledge exchange activities.
- Encourage the third sector to become more evidence based.
- Be **more involved in dissemination**
- More **towards knowledge transfer/synthesis** activities; getting the research agenda to inform policy (though some thought this was not the role of the forum and that the role of the forum was to encourage).
- **Encourage researchers to include utilisation** in their dissemination plans (go beyond the report).

Data

- Encourage more **standardization**
- Encourage more **data sharing** (local and national)
- Encourage more **use of existing data** (e.g. more data mining projects.)
Influencing the sector
- Identify research that can help the **third sector to develop.**
- Identify research that **demonstrates how the third sector can contribute** (e.g. research to influence local authorities, NHS Boards and other CPP members).
- By each forum member choosing 3-5 areas of research, choosing what they want to influence, mapping research 'consumers', disseminating and promote use.

- **What the forum should not do**

Everyone was clear that the forum should help forum members avoid duplication of effort. Some suggested the forum should have a practical focus and move away from "Research for research's sake". Several people noted that the forum was quite Scottish Government focussed and would like this to change. Scottish Government forum members noted that the forum had worked best when working jointly e.g. on OSCR's resilience data.

- **Changes to the structure of the meetings**
- **Thematic meetings** by policy topic (e.g. Health, Justice) especially topical policy priorities or by issue/idea (e.g. co-production, contribution to outcomes, service user involvement); Might draw in external people to present/facilitate a discussion.
- A mixture of 'business' (including information sharing) and thematic meetings throughout the year.

- **A shorter business section** at the beginning of the meeting (including the information sharing suggestion below) and then a thematic discussion.
- **Chair** Agreed that Scottish Government should remain the chair of the forum as they thought this gave the forum credibility in Government and in the sector.
- **Venue**- Agreed we should vary the venue for the meeting.
- **Format**- not always 'round table' small groups could be helpful for some discussions.
- **Frequency**- go back to meeting quarterly for continuity.

The way we share information

Why? Members will be better prepared to input on the research through having the main points in advance. The discussion will be more focussed and take up less time on the agenda.

Members would:

- Differentiate between research to be aware of and research they would want to discuss.
- Email Kay 2 weeks before the forum meeting with bullet points on the research they want to discuss.
- Kay would 'cluster' around common themes (if possible) and circulate to forum members.
- Read the research updates before the meeting.
- Once potential joint working/ partnerships were identified work and discussions could go on outwith the forum.

Gap analysis

Why? Our analysis of the gaps in research is partial- it could be made more comprehensive if we could find out from frontline services what their research needs are.

- Running a larger meeting with a wider group to look at research gaps
- The forum could run this meeting at 'The Gathering'.
- The results to be fed back to the following forum meeting and shape the programme for the Third Sector Research Conference.

Who we should have round the table

Think we have the right people but could include: Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS); Supporting Voluntary Action (SVA) Scotland's Independent Regeneration Network (SURF).

Next steps

Next quarter's meeting

- Meet at OSCR's offices for the next quarter meeting (Action Louise/Kay)
- Try out the proposal for information sharing
- Agree a revised remit (particularly aims and outcomes) in light of today's review
- Set the focus for next year

Things we need to consider

In pulling together the comments from the review I thought there were two things we need to bear in mind when planning for next year:

- We need to be aware of the difference between our individual organisation's outcomes and outcomes that the forum can (or should) work towards.
- We need to be realistic about what we can actually do at four meetings a year with very busy people attending! I think some of the activities/outcomes we identified in the discussion aren't within our sphere of control/influence as a forum. An example is the wish to have a significant influence on the wider third sector through research dissemination. While this is something we'd like to see there are whole organisations committed to that type of work and we might not be able to achieve it.