

# Note of the meeting

## Scottish Third Sector Research Forum

1 December 2015, 1.00 pm

Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4TB

### Present

Steven Marwick (ESS) (Chair)  
Patty Lozano-Casal (ESS) (minutes)  
Jane Marryat (ESS)  
Carolyn Sawers (BIG)  
Duncan Thorp (SES)  
Cassy Rutherford (VAS) (host)  
Ilse MacKinnon (SCVO)  
Louise Meikleham (OSCR)  
Helen Harper (VS)  
Mark Meiklejohn (SG)  
Fiona Malcolm (SG)  
Josie Isles (Inclusion Scotland) (external input)

### Apologies

Vivien Moffatt (IRISS)  
Claire Stevens (VHS)  
Gemma Jackson (VS)  
Andy Dey (ACOSVO)  
Chris Harkins (GCPH)  
Mark McGeachie (JIT)  
Sophie Flemig (UoE)  
Jacqueline Rae (SG)  
Alasdair Rutherford (UoS)  
Stephen Osborne (UoE)  
Jonathan Coburn (SVL)  
Anne MacDonald (HIENT)  
Rob Coward (NES)  
Helen Allbutt (NES)  
Gareth Allen (SG)  
Ruchir Shah (SCVO)

### Welcome and introductions

Steven welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly to Fiona Malcolm (SG) and Josie Isles (Inclusion Scotland), and noticed apologies. Introductions around the table followed.

Steven ran through the agenda and said that the meeting was an opportunity for the Forum to look back and forward in terms of its work and achievements.

### Minutes and matters arising

The **minutes** of the previous meeting (15 September 2015) were approved with amendments suggested by Vivien by e-mail. There weren't any matters arising.

**Action: Patty** to upload the minutes (with IRISS's new logo) onto the website.

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### Debrief from the Forum's discussion on the event with academics

Patty spoke briefing to the report on the "Let's Collaborate" event that she produced and circulated to the Forum in advanced of the meeting. Patty noted that:

- The event was well attended: 57 participants attended, 16 of which were academics. 36 (63%) participants completed the feedback form.
- Feedback from participants indicated that they felt the event was well organised and the programme was engaging, with interesting presentations and roundtables that showcased good partnership working practice. They said that they particularly appreciated the networking opportunities provided and would follow up connections made, would share learning with others and would look at the resources presented in more detail.
- 81% (26) of those who completed the feedback form thought having a research conference next year would be a good idea.

Key points from the discussion that followed included:

- The Forum's work to connect third sector and academia should link to what others are doing in this area (e.g. SCVO).
- LinkedIn and Facebook were mentioned as useful tools for the Forum to help people stay connected.
- In terms of linking to what others area doing the Forum thought it's important for the Forum to understand their work and find the thing that adds most value, to avoid replication.
- The third sector desires to take forward small pieces of work with academics. Members wondered whether the Forum could help with this, for example co-producing research.
- The Forum could offer a LinkedIn group page to support organisations to share information/ learning, as well as a light-touch match-making service (the latter might need some facilitation/ support). The Forum could pilot this, for example in collaboration with SCVO and/ or Inclusion Scotland's programmes.
- It'd be useful to get an update on the roundtable that IRISS held on 'making use of evidence for research in social services'.
- Andrew Kendrick (University of Strathclyde) is leading the work that the Scottish Social Work Services Strategic Forum is carrying out through the 'Improving the Use of Research and Evidence' workstream. It'd be useful to explore how the Forum can contribute to this work and stay connected.
- There seems to be a lack of research funders in Scotland. For instance, Helen was at an event at which brokers present weren't being funded by attending funding bodies, such as ESRC. The Forum couldn't think of initiatives that already exist to help research sharing across sectors.
- We should continue make use of our connections, for example with Interface and with funders (the latter might have funding that could support a funding

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research award/ prize). This will hopefully raise the profile of the Forum and collaborative research, incentivising good practice.

- The Forum agreed to run a third event with academics, scaling it up a bit and perhaps making use of an academic venue. Mark said that SG will be happy to consider a funding application to cover the costs of the venue and catering.

**Action: Patty** to upload the report on the event on the website.

**Action: Patty** to have a conversation with Josie on how the Forum can link to her research programme.

**Action: Patty** to explore with Andrew Kendrick how the Forum can contribute to the SSWS Strategic Forum's work.

**Action: ESS** to explore with some funders the idea of a 'funding research award/ prize' for the next Forum's event with academics.

**Action: ESS** to send a Doodle Poll to set the date for the next event with academics. **ESS** to explore academic venues.

### **Update on "Collaborating with academics" guide:**

Patty informed the Forum that the Knowledge Translation Network signed off the final draft of the "Collaborating with Academics" guide. The KTN expects the guide to be published in March 2016. Patty requested that the Forum promotes and disseminates the guide once it's published.

**Action: Patty** to share the KTN guide with the Forum when ready.

### **Update on SG's work on "Growing the social economy" (Fiona Malcolm):**

Fiona spoke to two papers (tabled/ circulated to the Forum in advance). She explained that SG is working with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIENT), Big Lottery Fund, local authorities and housing colleagues on proposals to attract funding from the European Social Fund (ESF). Fiona said that she welcomes the Forum's advice on what we can do to use resources from Europe and SG to build capacity in Scotland. Fiona explained that there isn't a detailed operational project for high strategic level objectives yet. Their intention is to run a grant programme that supports to develop social innovation approaches, to develop social economy in Scotland. Fiona said that they would like:

- Social enterprises to 'do and do stuff'
- Academia to raise awareness and make connections
- European Social Funding to be used to support co-produced research.

Fiona said that they have £9.7m for social economy until 2018 so they will probably run the grant programme in-house, as a Challenge Fund, given that the procurement process could take up to 12 months of the timeline. She informed that they'll probably appoint an independent assessor to make decisions about funding proposals.

Fiona said that the intention is to have an offering that is broad enough to bring people's ideas but not wide enough that people don't know what it is about.

Fiona said that this programme is likely to fund:

1. People who have ideas and want to form them/ follow them up – small grants

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2. People who want to pilot existing ideas
3. Replication/ scale up/ research of things that are already happening.

The Forum agreed to be a sounding board for this programme.

**Action: ESS** to invite Fiona to come along to a future Forum meeting to provide an update and to share learning at the next event with academics.

Some points made during the discussion included:

- How can we signpost people in the social economy to the academic world? For example, the Scottish Homelessness Network shared a case study at the last event with academics, of how the SHN and academics involved homeless people in designing questionnaires.
- People might have gone through a similar process, in terms of setting up small grant funds. Examples shared included SCVO's Capacity and Resilience Fund and BIG's Investing in Ideas Fund.
- Learning from BIG's Investing in Ideas we know that there is quite a lot of interest around evaluating what's been done but not so much around evaluating new ideas.
- Reflecting on the discussions that took place at the last event with academics between third sector organisations and academics, most of the chat was around social sciences and the use of evaluation and evidence. Social innovation is more about testing products so the pool of academics might be different. This is worth considering.
- Is there fear of failure and how is that perceived then by funders? BIG were upfront in their Investing in Ideas Fund about their expectation that some projects would not succeed and that it's about learning from failure as much as from success.
- In relation to the previous point, projects do not always tell the same story to funders than to others, such as ESS, IRISS, etc. An idea for the new SG fund would be to create a safe space for projects to share ideas.
- The Realising Ambition programme has produced quite a bit of learning on scaling up/ replicating interventions: <http://www.catch-22.org.uk/programmes-services/realising-ambition/programme-insights/>

**Action: All** to provide comments on the Social Economy Challenge Fund information by e-mail to Fiona by 20 May 2016. **Important note for members:** if you think you might be applying for this funding in the future don't get involved in its design to avoid conflicts of interest – don't respond!

**Action: ESS** to make a feature of the Social Economy Challenge Fund at the next event with academics (2016).

### **Sub-Group Updates**

The Forum broke into three different groups to discuss where we have got and what have we learned with a focus on the process of working in subgroups. A plenary discussion followed.

***'Health of the sector' subgroup update:***

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Ilse said that the group thought sharing what we are doing is very valuable. This subgroup focuses on doing a recap of what is happening in the sector, who is doing what and how the different bits link up.

Duncan said that he is having conversations with think tanks and it'd be useful for the Forum to hear from them.

**Action: Duncan and Ilse** to explore this together; perhaps, a handful of think tanks could form a panel at future meeting/s. **Action: ESS** to add to the work plan as an idea.

Louise said that OSCR is looking into bad press/ media coverage of funding bodies and how that has affected public trust/ confidence around fundraising. Learning is expected to be produced by summer 2016.

Ilse said that SCVO are working on getting examples of different ways in which people connect with charities to challenge public/ politics expectations.

**Action: ESS** to add an item on the agenda for March's meeting around 'public confidence in the sector: what do we know? What do we not know? How do we know?'

As a Forum we need to get better at communicating what we do and what we are about so we keep the interest from the third sector alive.

**Action: All** to consider adding links to the TSRF webpages.

The Forum agreed to **continue** running the 'Health of the sector' subgroup given how important their learning is, but focusing on specific issues.

### ***'Volunteering' subgroup update:***

Steven said that they reflected on the paper they wrote together. Learning included:

- There was good engagement across the group.
- It's important to be upfront of invested interests in the project and what would make it work
- In relation to the call for evidence, it's important to brief well and do more stakeholder engagement/ alliance building

**Action: Steven** to write a brief reflection note on the learning.

**Action: Steven** to write a blog for the TSRF webpages linking to relevant resources.

**Action: Volunteering subgroup** to consider submitting an article to Third Sector Force News on their evidence paper.

It was agreed that this subgroup **doesn't need to continue** as its job is now done.

### ***'Partnership' subgroup update:***

Josie joined this subgroup.

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The Compass was signed off by the group subject to some design minor changes, a new subheading for the title and review of support organisations list in resources section. The subgroup expects to publish the resource by March 2016.

**Action: Mark** to suggest a subheading. **Patty and Cassy** to finalise The Compass and circulate to the Forum link to the resource.

Once The Compass is published the 'partnership' subsector **can stop** working as its job will have been done.

Other general learning from the evaluation of the 'subgroup process' included:

- It's a good way of working: focused, practical, pushing things forward
- Their work should fill in gaps identified in the Forum's Evidence Framework. **Action: ESS** to add it as an item for March's meeting
- It's good to be able to move around subgroups, depending on where members' priorities are
- It's important to narrow down what the purpose/ remit of the subgroup is before the work starts
- Subgroups are useful to keep people informed of what the Forum is about and get ideas about future work
- Subgroups allow the Forum to cover more ground and keep a momentum going
- Their work doesn't have to be big pieces of research; they could be 2-page evidence summaries, deploy members to events of interest to share learning, etc.
- Subgroups need a leader to keep the momentum going and monitor progress; however, subgroups should be self-contained and members should be accountable for their contribution too.

The Forum agreed to continue with the subgroups approach to delivering its work.

**Action: ESS** to add an item to the agenda for March to identify subgroups and work to take forward in 2016/ 17.

**Action: ESS** to bring the first draft of the work plan for the Forum to work on.

**Action: All** to e-mail Patty with ideas for the Forum's 2016/ 17 work plan.

### Member Updates

***"Disability Research on Independent Living & Learning programme"–  
Josie Isles, Inclusion Scotland***

Information about the DRILL programme: UK - <http://www.drilluk.org.uk/>; In Scotland - <http://www.drilluk.org.uk/about-disability-research-on-independent-living-and-learning-drill/scotland/>

Josie spoke to the slides that were tabled at the meeting. She said that DRILL is a consortium involving Inclusion Scotland, Disability Action (Northern Ireland),

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Disability Rights UK and Disability Wales. With this programme, Josie said that Inclusion Scotland aims to:

- Draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect disabled people's everyday lives and exclude us from society
- Lobby and campaign so that disabled people can fully access their human rights and are involved in partnership work throughout Scotland and the UK.

In terms of funding, Josie didn't know how much it'll go to Scotland. The quality of the proposals will determine where the funding goes.

Josie said that DRILL is the first research project of its kind and so she was interested to hear the Forum's ideas/ advice to shape the programme. She explained that her role involves capacity building to help the partnership work.

Josie said that Patty had already given her key contacts to speak at her events, such as Dr Sarah Morton (Centre for Research on Families and Relationships) and Nick Watson (What Works Scotland) because researchers will be using theory of change as well as participative research.

Josie said that she's also interested in looking at different kinds of relationships so the Forum's matchmaking events and partnership tools would be helpful.

The Forum found the project outline exciting. Some of the key points made include:

- Understanding how people do research is gold dust to many, particularly getting a sense of what research questions they ask and how relationships are built, how they happen and what help.
- Learning about disability research and co-production can be transferable to other areas
- Language can be a barrier for disabled people who have never thought about it before – there are readability checks for text that give you a score on how easy your text is to read and provide suggestions on how to make it easier to read. **Action: Helen** to share these tools
- According to Josie, Inclusion Scotland's policy lead, Bill Scott, will take findings from the research programme and feed them into policy to change legislation if possible, particularly around the Welfare Reform
- Fiona Garven (SCDC) and Dr Cathy Sharp (SCARF, Community Research Fund) have really good learning on working in geographic communities to build capacity research. **Action: Patty** to share contact details

Members of the Forum are interested in the learning process. **The Forum invited Inclusion Scotland to become a core member of the Forum** with Josie as a representative. **Action: Patty** to follow up with Josie and get Inclusion Scotland's logo.

### Other Updates

Duncan said that the consultations from SES on their manifesto is out now (deadline: 23 December 2015): <http://us4.campaign->

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[archive2.com/?u=8404abc02931e99b60c674569&id=dccb1eb058&e=86933fe09a](http://archive2.com/?u=8404abc02931e99b60c674569&id=dccb1eb058&e=86933fe09a). Ilse said SCVO is consulting too: <http://www.scvo.org.uk/news-campaigns-policy/>. **Action: Duncan and Ilse** to liaise over their manifestos.

Helen said that VS is currently developing a survey 'Volunteering in Scottish Charities' which they'd like to distribute soon. The focus of the survey will be the potential for growing volunteering in local Scottish Charities - which fits with VS organisational objectives - but they are keen to make sure the findings are as useful to as many organisations as possible. The survey was shared as a member update with the Forum in advance of the meeting. **Action: All** to share the survey with networks before Christmas.

To read previous findings go to: <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/policy-and-research/research/volunteering-in-charities/>

Louise said that she would like to consult with the Forum to link with any existing facts and figures on the public confidence on charities. She is interested in learning about what people use/ need. **Action: Louise** to contact the Forum in due course.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

9 March 2016 – TBC (Edinburgh)

**Action: Members** who can host a meeting in Edinburgh to let Patty know that they'd be interested in hosting the March meeting.

**Action: Patty** to send dates for meetings in 2016/ 17 and the date for the event with academics in September 2016. **All** to consider hosting a meeting and let Patty know of any suitable dates.