

What impact means to me? – Lucy Mulvagh, Third Sector

Hello, I'm Lucy Mulvagh from the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, and I've been asked to talk about what impact means to me as a representative of the third sector.

Many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to today's event – it's a real honour.

At the latest count, the third sector includes over 40,000 organisations, employs over 106 thousand people, and benefits from the work of nearly one and a half million volunteers. So, I can really only claim to be speaking for myself!!

First, I'd like to echo what my sister panellists have said.

I'd like to start with a quote from the great Dolly Parton, who said, "If you don't like the road you're walking, start paving another one."

The reason why I think Dolly's words are so apt is because this is what the Third Sector does. It provides solutions, leads radical, positive change and designs and delivers creative, innovative and often profoundly invaluable support and services to people all over the country.

Dolly's words also reflect in part what impact means for me. It's as much about 'how' things are done - the process - as the 'what' they set out to achieve.

So, in terms of research, it's about co-production and ensuring people are at the centre. We all need to be given the opportunity to lead and be involved in a free, meaningful and active way at all stages.

Impact is also about learning directly from people about what works and what doesn't for them, and making the necessary changes to our culture, systems and processes in response.

These are a couple of the reasons why my organisation, the ALLIANCE, is actively promoting and supporting peer research in Scotland - a type of research that can have great and wide-reaching impact.

We are involved in this work with NHS Health Scotland and the Centre for Health Policy at Strathclyde University.

This cross sectoral partnership demonstrates how academia, the public and Third Sectors can come together to achieve positive impact.

You can hear more about one of our peer research projects in the morning workshop called 'What do you mean I have a right to health?'

Another peer research project we've done focused on employability in Fife.

And we're currently seeking funding for a peer research project to explore Adverse Childhood Experiences and what works to mitigate and prevent them.

As well as actual research, the ALLIANCE and our partners have developed a collective to support and promote the use of peer research. We do this to help influence change and have a positive impact on policy and practice, to bring benefits to peer researchers, the organisations involved and ultimately people and communities across Scotland. One example of positive impact from our work comes from the peer research project on employability in Fife.

Amongst other things, the project helped to raise awareness about human rights with some of Fife's decision makers. As a result, a new criteria was included in the EU Social Challenge Fund application process. It means that services applying for funds to deliver employability programmes have to demonstrate how their services incorporate human rights principles. This includes how people will participate in decisions that affect them, how programmes will ensure non-discrimination and equality, how programmes will help empower people, and how programmes will be accountable. Services applying to the fund were trained on human rights and we look forward to seeing the fruits that this early work will produce, but it's a great start.

This is just one example of how taking a rights-based approach in both the design and focus of a peer research project can have a direct and positive impact on people's lives, and demonstrates what impact means for me.

Thank you.