



Community & Voluntary Sector Panel meeting
Meeting Notes
Monday 19 April 2021, 7.30 pm
Online via Zoom

Attendees: ABC Council – Jennie Dunlop, Prospect Awards CIC – Anna Clarke, Clanmill Housing – Austin Kelly, Migrant Support Service – Brendan MacPartlin, Stepping Stones NI – Carla Bowyer, Action Mental Health – Colin Loughran, ABC Seniors Network – David Hammerton, County Armagh Community Development – David McMullen, P2000 – Geraldine Lawless, Banbridge Twinning Association – Gilbert Lee, Women’s Aid – Helen Cranney, Community Advice Craigavon – Jennifer Fearon, Mencap – Liam Burns, West Armagh Consortium – Stephen Fields, Ulster GAA – Anne Garvey, Craigavon & Banbridge Volunteer Bureau – Donna Stewart, Salvation Army – Martin Stevenson

Apologies: Craigavon Area Foodbank – Chris Leech, ABC Community Network – Emma Brannigan, The Fitzone Foundation – Sean Collins, ABC Council – Michelle Markey, Derrylee Community Group – Frances Kerr, Autism NI – Christine Kearney

1. Welcome & Introductions

Geraldine Lawless, Interim Chair of Community and Voluntary Sector Panel welcomed everyone to the meeting. Geraldine explained that the meeting will be an opportunity to explore what issues everyone has faced over the past year and to share experiences.

2. Overview of CVSP activity

Geraldine invited members of the CVSP Planning Group to provide a short update on some of the activities panel members have been involved in since the panel last met:

CVSP Planning Group – Gilbert Lee, Banbridge Twinning

Gilbert made the following points: Panel has gone through a lot of changes since it was established in 2018 including departures, new members and the COVID-19 pandemic. There are ongoing changes to the Panel including updating the Terms of Reference and selecting new representatives for Community Planning meetings. The Planning Group meets fortnightly and it is hoped that proposals can be taken to the next CVSP Full meeting in July. By September 2020, it is hoped that there will be post-COVID plan for the borough, a stronger management team, a clearer structure of Community Planning and details of a new Programme for Government from Stormont. All of these will require an input from the

Community Planning team and Panel. Elections will take place in the Summer following the review of the CVSP Terms of Reference.

Tak£500 Participatory Budgeting Project – Stephen Fields, West Armagh Consortium

Stephen Fields commented the Tak£500 ran successfully despite the COVID-19 restrictions in effect. There was a great success with the collaboration of statutory partners and the perception of funding. The grants have all been allocated but unfortunately not all groups have been able to complete their projects yet due to on-going restrictions. Stephen has had positive feedback from groups based in Armagh who received grants and believes that it is something which should be run again, hopefully face-to-face. Further information on the TAK£500 project can be found on the council website at <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/take500/>

Shared Leadership programme and Response & Recovery Action Plan – Donna Stewart, C&B Volunteer Bureau

Donna provided an update on the Shared Leadership Programme and the Response and Recovery Plan. Some Panel members participated in the Shared Leadership training ran by Anna Clarke from November 2020 to March 2021. The key components were the core principals of leadership, working with others to build leadership, building respect and trust, communication externally with other agencies, strength and collaborate working and decision-making and how to influence with a positive effect. Some sessions had key speakers who were able to talk about the shared leadership skills and the theories and principles they each had. Donna personally found the training useful in her current role. For the Response & Recovery Action Plan, Donna and Jane Gribben from Volunteer Now are looking into building resilience in the community around volunteering.

A copy of the Response & Recovery Action Plan will be shared with the group after the meeting.

3. Reconnecting as a Panel

Panel Members were divided into break-out rooms to discuss the following questions:

1. What have you been doing since the previous meeting which took place last year
2. How have things been for you and your group

Group 1

- Lively discussion in group
- During lockdown we had to be doing things differently
- Community work with individuals and not groups
- More Cross community work – going into communities wouldn't have worked with in the past
- Scale of activity and sheer numbers being supported
- Challenges of keeping things going in the winter
- Lot of positives
- People developing new skills and new ways of working
- Resilience came across really strongly
- Emerging issues – depression and poverty

Group 2

- People need to discipline themselves and not do what did before – social distance, fewer numbers etc – think differently and respect others concerns and safety
- Lot of ‘normal’ business couldn’t be done – people for whom English not first language – DfC support from translation taken away last year – now during COVID-19 migrant and BAME communities have found it much harder again to access help and support (Colin Action Mental Health have a lot of translated advice and guidance materials – contact Colin Loughran)
- Brexit – problems around immigration status for migrant workers and leading to homelessness and other issues
- Increase in domestic abuse reporting during 2020 and police records
- Women’s Aid – anticipating increase in poverty in months ahead for women and children
- Voluntary groups have sometimes been first on the scene in terms of suicide and critical mental health issues

Group 3

- COVID-19 community response – all the range of supports offered
- Some groups migrated to remote learning and now jam packed in terms of provision online
- Real need for help for people not ready for the standard employability supports yet – because of the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, confidence etc. Also people with dual diagnosis with autism and mental health issues – services are now online for many clients and this was a big struggle for them – Staff also need more accredited training around supporting people in need through remote means, and more meaningful training on zoom and teams as do people accessing support
- From end of summer 2020 now more of a blended approach to give the face-to-face contact as well as online support
- Positives – collaborative working has been very positive

Group 4

- Impact – programmes stopped for so many. Had to move things on line – easier for emergency support (ordering food parcels, medicines collections etc) but harder for support for programmes – which is where the direct contact with people can take place.
- All organisations now wrestling how to take forward as things open up - sitting beside someone in crisis. Concern over just keeping in contact with volunteers and also how to continue to raise funds in current economic climate.

4. Challenges and issues facing the sector

Panel members were divided into 4 groups to each discuss a question with 2 groups looking at question 3:

1. What are the key needs and challenges for the community and voluntary sector groups
2. What are the key challenges are there for the communities in the future
3. What support does the community and voluntary sector need now and long-term

Group 1 – What are the key needs and challenges for CVS Groups?

- Must be a clear plan moving forward – been too much uncertainty around what we can/cant do, opening up dates etc
- Confidence needs rebuilt of local people – so much isolation, it will be challenging to encourage people out again and feel safe and comfortable in group settings
- Food not always the necessity – often been isolation – will continue in terms of its impact
- Needs a budget for supporting action around the specific needs that have emerged
- Volunteers need upskilling and training to address new needs – especially need to recruit younger volunteers as many of the older volunteers don't want to take risks or mix in groups anymore
- Befriending services – now proven to work but need more volunteers to provide this
- Voluntary groups have direct knowledge of needs and issues on the grounds – this must be acknowledged by statutory agencies in a meaningful and collaborative way, not just lip service compliments

Group 2 – What are the key challenges in the communities in the future?

- Challenges – funding and where to get it, will past schemes be available? Cant fundraise in same way through a lot of the old types of activities– normal has changed and we need to rethink and share new ideas
- Return to play protocol needs safeguarding – fear among many people that they need to feel safe – makes it hard to plan for the future
- Groups dealing with mental health issues – demand will increase post-COVID – overflow of demand expected and how can we cope – need a collective approach to manage the deluge
- Must always need and have a sense of hope
- Needs – many helpers have gone away and wont return – will need to fight hard to get them back or get new ones – what is the better focus to place the energy on?
- Security of funding – sources
- CCNI Checks and controls eased at the start of lockdown but if they come back it will make environment very hard especially for small groups

Group 3 and Group 4 – What support does the CVS need now and in the longer term?

- Always a place for zoom but not all programmes transfer to zoom well
- CVS Panel meetings are good on zoom but some groups want to meet face to face
- Zoom also helps for people with mobility issues and other constraints – transport, childcare etc
- Immigration and Brexit – issues really coming to the fore now especially for migrant communities
- Climate change – big challenge facing us and all communities – we will be faced with this. Proposed plan to put a forest on the Black Mountain
- Place-shaping meetings in Armagh – make urban centres more appealing and more eco-friendly

Community Planning update

Jennie Dunlop, Community and Strategic Planning Manager, provided an update on the changes to the Community Planning Partnership structure. There are 2 Sub-Committees who feed into the Community Planning Strategic Partnership. The Better Outcomes Sub-Committee focuses on what the Partnership is doing. The Leadership & engagement Sub-Committee focuses on how the Partnership works together.

The Better Outcomes Sub-Committee is leading the COVID-19 Response & Recovery Action Plan. This plan replaces the former 6 thematic action plans for an interim 12-month period while recovering from COVID-19.

There are 27 actions in the Plan which come under 5 themes that were identified through a Community Planning survey in June 2020.

The next Statement of Progress will be written over the summer and will be looking into the impact of COVID-19 in the borough and how the outcomes in the Community Plan are being delivered.

Included in the Response & Recovery Action Plan is the Council's first Locality Plan for the Community Plan which will focus on Armagh at a local level and look at how to link spatial planning and Community Planning.

5. Next steps

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 5 July. Geraldine invited panel members to make suggestions for the focus of the next meeting.

Colin Loughran, Action Mental Health suggested discussing mental health at the next meeting, this was reiterated in the chat by several panel members. Donna offered to work with Colin on developing this theme for the next meeting.

Donna Stewart advised that Volunteer's Week will be taking place on the first week of June. 'Thank you' boxes will be distributed in areas across the borough and Donna has asked if Panel members could let her know how many volunteers are in their organisations. Donna will be advertising this nearer the time.

6. Thanks and close

Anna asked everyone to send their feedback for the meeting through the Zoom chat. A copy of the zoom chat can be found at appendix one.

Jennie will send information to Panel members about collating an infographic to highlight the issues and themes from the discussion.

Appendix one: Copy of Zoom chat Community and Voluntary Sector Panel Meeting 19th April

- Anne Garvey: ok with me
- Colin Loughran: no problem
- Geraldine Lawless: thanks everyone
- Anna Clarke: Maybe the report could be shared with members again afterwards for anyone who may not have seen yet.
- Martin Stevenson: That would be helpful Anna, thank you.
- David: I'm having poor broadband issues and my reception keeps freezing. I'll try to keep engaged with everyone
- Gilbert Lee: Gilbert's email
- Colin Loughran: cloughran@amh.org.uk
- Gilbert Lee: gilbertrlee@gmail.com
- David's iPad: If anyone would like to receive our monthly newsletter drop me an email requesting it david@cacd.org.uk
- Geraldine Lawless: Thanks everyone
- Geraldine Lawless: Thanks Liam, Carla ,Martin,
- Austin Kelly: My email address Austin.Kelly@clanmil.org.uk
- Carla Bowyer: Hi Everyone, my email is Carla.bowyer@stepping-stones.org.uk
- Liam Burns: my email is liam.burns@mencap.org.uk
- Stephen Fields: westarmaghconsortium@gmail.com
- Donna Stewart: My email is info@youcanhelp2.org
- Anne Garvey: annegarvey625@btinternet.com
- Geraldine Lawless: Can we share everyones email please via email
- Jennie Dunlop: No problem, will do
- Martin Stevenson: martin.stevenson@salvationarmy.org.uk
- Jennifer Fearon: Jennifer.fearon@advicecraigavon.com
- Brendan MacPartlin: Yes, Geraldine send out email addresses
- Donna Stewart: please Geraldine that would be good
- Brendan MacPartlin: Brendan.macpartlin@gmail.com
- Anna Clarke: Stephen feel free to add other feedback to the chat
- Geraldine Lawless: Thanks everyone
- Donna Stewart: Thank you everyone
- Stephen Fields: Just like to reiterate what Donna said there. Mental health issues were very much to the fore of our discussion and a big challenge for community will be to meet this challenge with the expected squeeze on resources.
- Geraldine Lawless: Assistance for Volunteers with Mental Health Issues after dealing with issues on the ground look after our volunteers
- Donna Stewart: it is so important to do that
- Anna Clarke: next meeting proposed for - 5th July - evening
- Donna Stewart: I would be happy to work with you on that Colin
- Martin Stevenson: Really sorry everyone but I have to go. Thank you for this evening.
- David's iPad: Thanks everyone battery's low
- Anna Clarke: thanks Martin, take care
- Geraldine Lawless: volunteers week 1-7 june
- Anna Clarke: 1st to 7th June - Volunteers week
- Anna Clarke: info can go out to the full panel in advance
- Donna Stewart: Great meeting thanks everyone
- Colin Loughran: good, always thanks

- Brendan MacPartlin: Good, dynamic
- Donna Stewart: Really good
- David: Good thanks
- Geraldine Lawless: Excellent thank you everyone great discussion very pointed
- Jennifer Fearon: good. many thanks.
- Austin Kelly: Good, some really interesting discussions this evening
- Carla Bowyer: Good, thank you all, really enjoyed seeing new faces and hearing about other groups and the fantastic work they are doing! Keep up the great work all :)
- Anne Garvey: Good meeting : zoom meetings with breakout sessions seem to work well for the CVSP.
- Liam Burns: Good meeting - very useful discussions.. Thanks everyone!
- Stephen Fields: Good. Enjoyed the breakout rooms and the specific focus they allowed.
- Donna Stewart: Really enjoyed breakout rooms