Making the Connections

Inside this issue:

Chief Executive’s View 2
The Local Service Board 2
Collaboration 3
Co Production 5
Events and Workshops 6
Funding 8
Public Engagement 11

The team
A Chief Executive’s View

In Carmarthenshire we are already seeing the benefits of the making the connections project, with the officer increasing the capacity we have to be able to address organisational need. The making the connections Officers are working in what is both an exciting and challenging time for a number of organisations. Whilst there are funding cuts being made, there are also new opportunities available for working in different ways with partner organisations, this collaborative working is key to the future of many third sector organisations, the making the connections project is key to bringing organisations together from different sectors, engaging with organisations, allowing opportunities for working in a different way.

The making the connection officers are able to provide opportunities that bring together different sectors, both for information sharing and to work together towards longer lasting solutions.

Marie Mitchell
Acting Executive Director
Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS)

The Local Service Boards

What’s in your Single integrated plan

The single integrated plan (SIP) has now been completed in each area of Wales. It was established to replace previous strategies and plans to include; the community strategy, the children and young people’s plan, the community safety partnership plan and the health, social care and wellbeing strategy. Each single integrated plan has been finalised by Local Service Boards to reflect the needs of the local people within each county.

To find out more about the single integrated plan in each of the convergence area within Wales, please click on one of the links below;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anglesey</th>
<th>Bridgend</th>
<th>Blaenau Gwent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caerphilly</td>
<td>Carmarthenshire</td>
<td>Ceredigion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conwy</td>
<td>Denbighshire</td>
<td>Gwynedd</td>
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<td>Merthyr Tyfil</td>
<td>Neath Port Talbot</td>
<td>Pembrokeshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda Cynon Taff</td>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>Torfaen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The impact of welfare reforms on people living in Bridgend County was raised as a concern by partners on the Bridgend Local Service Board. As a result, a Welfare Reforms task and finish Group was set up to explore how people in Bridgend could be best supported through the reforms.

Feedback from awareness sessions held throughout Bridgend County have found a majority of frontline staff and volunteers raise concerns over the inability to have access to information that was up to date and could assist them when working with clients in the community.

Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations recently asked third sector organisations to give their feedback on welfare reform and the challenges which they and their service users face by completing an online survey. So far, feedback received has expressed the same concerns; key partners from Bridgend local service board formed a task and finish group to explore how to reduce the impact of these changes in the county.

Bridgend Local service board partners have formed a moodle site which is being hosted by Bridgend College. The site is intended to ensure that the people affected by the changes to the welfare reforms receive the advice and support that they need to help them make the right decisions at the right time, and so reduce the impacts on families, communities and services in Bridgend.

The Moodle site will allow frontline workers to view the latest information, ask questions of local experts and find links to further advice and support for their clients. This site can be accessed by computer, laptop, mobile or tablet.

If you are an organisation covering the area of Bridgend County and would like access to the site, please contact: Joanne Williams at Bavo@bavo.org.uk with your details and email address and we will do the rest!

If you or your organisation have not taken part in the survey, you would like to and you cover Bridgend County please click here.
Support for Armed Forces in the Community

Conwy Voluntary Services Council signs the Armed Forces Community Covenant as a commitment from the third sector of Conwy that we will work together to ensure that the Armed Forces Community suffers no disadvantage as a result of their active service for our Country. The covenant was also signed by representatives from the county council, armed forces and health board at a ceremony held at the Blind Veterans Centre Llandudno on 13th April.

The aim of the community covenant is to encourage local communities and the county’s service providers to support the service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed forces community. We want both communities to thrive in Conwy in an integrated way.

A workshop was held on June 24th with representatives of third sector and public sector organisations to discuss the way forward following the signing. These ideas are being progressed and one free swimming for veterans and serving forces personnel was launched on 25th July.

Announcing PAVS’ new Social Enterprise & Economy Network

Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) has identified a need for a Social Enterprise and Economy Network as a local third sector resource in Pembrokeshire. The Social Enterprise and Economy Network will provide an opportunity for groups and individuals to network, share best practice and find out about training opportunities. It will also help to improve links between the third sector and the Pembrokeshire Local Service Board (LSB), particularly around the economy priority theme for the Single Integrated Plan.

Establishing the network is a joint venture between officers of two of PAVS’ convergence projects. Cara Wilson, Development Officer for Enterprising Communities and Julie Kirk the Making the Connections Officer are working together to get the network up and running. The network will initially be ‘virtual’ but this can change depending on what the members want. For further information please contact Cara or Julie or visit our web page.
The challenges of public service delivery are well known across Wales – increasing demand together with reduced resources. But the opportunities presented through effective joint working with communities are also high on the agenda.

The Anglesey and Gwynedd Local Service Board and Anglesey County Council are working closely with the Third Sector to design effective preventative ‘co-production’ inspired services on the island. The Local Service Board has included ‘developing strong communities’ as a central theme and ‘co-production’ specifically as one of its main priorities.

To further co-productive practice on the island Medrwn Mon’s Making the Connections officer organised a two day event titled ‘Co-production in the Spirit of Effective Partnership Working’. The event was well attended by staff from both Third Sector and Public sector and examined the opportunities and challenges relating to co-productive working.

Tom Edwards of Groundwork North Wales expressed these comments following the training:

“The two day Empower Co-production event was an excellent opportunity to link up with third sector and statutory partners to explore how to improve the service offer to local communities across the region. In particular the training demonstrated the positive benefits of partnership and resource sharing among organisations and groups. From our perspective, it was a great chance to discuss and explore collaborative working and I am sure it will lead to more consortia development across Anglesey as the tender process opens up.

One particular area of interest is the opportunity for the third sector to play a role in the design and delivery of services alongside public sector partners. The use of the case study on the second day of training really helped bring these ideas together”.

Work now continues to ensure ‘co-production’ practices are embedded into structures and processes across sectors on Anglesey.
Events and Workshops across Wales

Equality and Diversity

On June 13th, CAVO’s Making the Connections officer along with their Enterprising Communities officer and Ceredigion County Council’s Community Cohesion officer held a joint Equality and Diversity event at Lampeter University. The aim was to discuss the workplace policy in an innovative and engaging way, using workshops and World Café as engagement tools.

The day was chaired by Ellen ap Gwyn, Leader of Ceredigion CC and guest speakers included Mrs Uzo Iwobi OBE, Former Commissioner to the Commission for Racial Equality Uk, Jamie Lewis, Cardiff University’s Seren project, Henry Langen, Pembrokeshire disabled political activist and Paul Swann, Disability Wales.

Small World Theatre ran theatre forum workshops, and the World Café session was split into the nine protected characteristics and had excellent feedback. 85% stated that they had an increased and improved knowledge of the policy as a result of the event.

‘House in Order’

The aim of the ‘House in Order’ workshops is to improve the capacity of third sector organisations to participate in the planning of local services in Gwynedd by supporting them to ensure that the necessary policy and procedures are in place if they are to tender for a service agreement, contract or to apply for grants. With this in mind we have organised the following workshops:

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS MADE EASY – this extremely successful (and totally new) workshop was held in July 2013. Chief Officers from five organisations attended, and the feedback was extremely positive. As a follow up, Mantell Gwynedd will be holding surgeries for 1:1 support for these organisations in September.

Quality Management Made Easy – Many Small and Medium Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations are increasingly being asked to include Quality Management System as part of their operations, especially if they wish to tender for contracts in Wales and across the UK. Until now ISO 9001 has been the only option for many organisations. QMS Easy offers a simplified version of ISO 9001. It covers all of the important aspects of quality management in ISO without the mountain of paperwork: in a format that can easily be installed by the organisation itself using just 6 documents an organisation can run the system without an independent audit/certificate or can receive an independent external audit for approximately £250 compared to £1500 to £2500 for ISO 9001 or PQASSO.

Workshop aims and objectives: This workshop is designed to assist small businesses and organisations (50 employees or less) to get to grips with quality management systems. Attendees will work through the templates, and come out of the workshop with a substantial amount of the system in place, to complete the necessary steps towards having an effective Quality Management System.
The most recent Third Sector Forum was held on the 22nd July at Llandybie Hall. Carmarthenshire’s Third Sector forum provides an excellent opportunity for third sector organisations to network across sector and organisations. They are informed of recent and on-going developments, partnership working and have the opportunity to exchange information.

As well as the Voluntary Sector; our partners from the Local Service Board (LSB), Environment Partnership, Community Safety, Social Care Workforce Development Partnership (SCWDP) and the COMPACT all provided an update to a wide range of people from the third and statutory sector and partners. Including Carmarthenshire County Council, Public health Wales, Hywel Dda Health Board, Dyfed Powys Police, University of Wales Trinity Saint Davids and the Welsh Government.

A variety and very current topics were covered throughout the event to meet the needs of different people and organisations, including; Public Engagement in Carmarthenshire, Carmarthenshire Partnership Update; (LSB, Environment and Community Safety) COMPACT, Continuity and Change Consultation, Tendering, Procurement and Sell 2 Wales, SIP Programme, Carmarthenshire Learning Festival, Restorative Practice, Lifelong Learning in Carmarthenshire, Play, Intergenerational Learning, Population Management Groups, Support for life Funding, Third Sector Brokers

If you missed the forum, or would like to re-cap on the day’s events, you will find all the information here from digital footage to presentations. If you would like any further information or have any topics that you would like covered in future forums please contact Kelly Price
All you need to know about funding and loans

Funding Advice:

WCVA facilitates a network of CVC staff who work in Funding Advice: the Funding SON (Service Operational Network). The network is chaired by Carl Cooper, Chief Officer of PAVO. These are the staff who have responsibility for funding advice in their organisations, although their job titles may be Funding advice officer, development officer, Information Officer etc.

As part of the Partnership Agreement, WCVA and CVCs divide responsibility on funding advice: CVCs deal with local organisations; WCVA answers national queries; and regional queries tend to be shared (e.g. CVCs sometimes work together, WCVA sometimes deals with them).

Advice:

**Contracts under £25k** – These vary according to the discretion of the purchasing authority, and it would be about contacting individual Local Authorities. There is unfortunately no consistency in how these opportunities are advertised: some LAs might advertise and conduct full competitive tendering exercises; others might request 3 quotes from suppliers they know. For info, I have compiled a list of links to different Local Authorities who publicise how they procure

**Grant funding** – CVCs have best access to local grant information, and some have produced information sheets about grant funding available in their areas. For all opportunities, organisations can conduct a grant search for free here:

**Slippage on large budgets which becomes available** – this tends to be opportunistic and there isn't a co-ordinated way of knowing where these will become available. Sustainable Funding Cymru certainly promote those they become aware of.

**Any others** – Sustainable Funding Cymru try to keep abreast of all funding opportunities, and advertise them in WCVA’s newsletter. Sara Carroll in WCVA manages Sustainable Funding Cymru and is the Group Co-ordinator for Funding Advice: scarroll@wcva.org.uk or 029 2043 1777.

**Top tips— Keep up to date by:**
- Registering on Sell2Wales
- Use GRANTnet.
- Receiving WCVA’s newsletter
- Link with the contact for funding advice in the CVC
- Gareth Coles, WCVA
Social Investment - From micro loans to Wales Wellbeing Bonds

Social investment comes in many guises and whether it is called a bond, a loan or equity capital, each generally has a common denominator – unlike a grant, it is repayable.

Clearly, grants have an important role to play in financing the sector and understandably remain the first choice of most organisations. But as the funding landscape changes and they become more difficult to obtain, repayable finance, typically via a loan, is now far more commonly used by social enterprises looking to expand their income generation capabilities. That extra income is key as it provides the money to repay the borrowing.

It’s not all just about non-availability of grants making loans more popular – decision making can often be much quicker and the restrictions as to the use of funds much less. This puts organisations in more control over the timing and nature of their projects.

To meet these needs, WCVA now has a full suite of social investment alternatives:

**Micro Business Loan Fund**
- Partnership with Credit Unions and Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- All Wales
- Loan size £1,000 to £20,000
- Maximum term 5 years
- Interest rate 10%

**Communities Investment Fund**
- Convergence area only
- Loan size £20,000 to £250,000
- Maximum term 25 years
- Interest rate 6%
- ‘Loan ready’ grants

**Property Loan Fund**
- Partnership with Unity Trust Bank
- All Wales
- Loan size £250,000 to £5,000,000
- Maximum term 30 years
- Interest rate currently around 4.5%
- 1.5% fee
- 75% loan to value

**Wales Wellbeing Bond**
- Collaborative working
- New ways to deliver public services
- A variant of Social Investment Bonds
- Repayment from savings

At its simplest, the Wales Wellbeing Bond might just provide finance to cash flow a payment in arrears or payment by results contract. At its most effective it is a partnership between public and third sector bodies to change the way a service is delivered in a local community. Explore further by clicking here.

The main message is that if you have a viable business proposition, the finance is available. We don’t want any good ideas to fail simply for the want of funding.

For more information or to talk through your idea contact: -
WCVA Helpdesk 0800 2888 329
Email cif@wcva.org.uk

Alun Jones, WCVA
Public Engagement Training:

What are the National Principles?
The National Principles for Public Engagement were endorsed by the Welsh Government in March 2011. These are principles and NOT standards. They are an overarching set of principles aimed at Public Service organisations across all sectors in Wales. They aim to sit above any specific standards that you may already be using e.g. Standards for Children and Young People, Social Services Improvement Agency standards and are intended to compliment them. They aim to offer a consistent approach and good standard for public engagement across Wales.

If your organisation completes and returns a declaration of endorsement form to participationcymru@wcva.org.uk you have signed up to these principles and will use them as a guiding document in your public engagement work. A list of organisations who have endorsed the principles can be found here.

Training for the Third Sector:
Participation Cymru and the Making Connections team are collaborating to offer third sector organisations currently involved or will be involved in public service delivery the opportunity to undertake Public Engagement training. The training will provide organisations with guidance to engage in accordance with the 10 National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. Participants will go through the principles and the toolkit, use simple participatory techniques and be able to effectively plan and evaluate engagement work in a straightforward, common-sense, participatory way. Click here for further information. It is hoped that at the end of this day organisations will see the benefit of the Principles and will endorse them as a way of engaging with people in an effective way. The toolkit is a useful planning and evaluating tool that will help to demonstrate how effectively they are engaging. Click here for the confirmed dates in your area.

Public Engagement Course Evaluation, Denbighshire and Conwy:
The feedback from the course already held for groups in Conwy and Denbighshire found that the majority of attendees had a good or excellent impression of the day and found the content relevant to their needs. Judging by the comments received from delegates at this session, it is well worth attending:

- Excellent course, relaxed but informative
- Very interesting and interactive course. Felt truly more informed and inspired
- Brilliant day- from zero to hero in terms of knowledge

For the training course evaluation report from Denbighshire and Conwy, please click here.