

## Cross Party Group Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector

Minute

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 – 13:00-14:30

Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament

Convenor: Margaret McDougall MSP

Topic: Role of Voluntary Sector & Volutneers in Public Services

### **In attendance:**

Margaret McDougall MSP (Convenor), Joan McAlpine MSP, John Mason MSP, Kate Wane, Martin Doherty, Niall Sommerville, Annette Wilson, Gina Wilson, Paul Okros, Jan Holt, Pauline Cuthbert, Morven Maclean, Shelia McPherson. Elspeth Molony, Coleen Kelly, Rachel Hnery, Harriet Eadie, Carla Fyfe, Donna Morris, Cat Campbell, Susan Murray, Margaret Gibb, John MacDonald, Paul O’Kane, Sara Redmond, Joy Mitchell, Yvonne Collins

### **Apologies:**

Lorna Rivans, Gillian Lithgow, Fraser Hudghton, Liz Watson, Susan Swan, Fiona Barlow, Traci Kirkland, Stephanie Guerin, Rebecca Marek, Alexa Anderson

**Welcome and introductions:** The Convenor wished everyone a Happy New Year. Margaret also noted that this was the first of our trial lunchtime meetings and that it was nice to see the room busy.

### **1. Minutes and matters arising:**

- i) It was noted that due to her appointment as Minister for Youth & Women's Employment Annabelle Ewing MSP had stood down as Deputy Convenor and resigned her membership of the CPG as per the Ministerial Code.
- ii) MSPs were notified of the vacancy ahead of the meeting and invited to attend if they were interested in taking the position. The group is pleased to welcome Joan McAlpine MSP as its new Deputy Convenor. The group will write to Annabelle to thank her for her efforts as Deputy Convenor.
- iii) Susan Murray (SCVO) highlighted that she had sent some accompanying links to be added to the minutes of the last meeting to signpost people to the relevant sites discussed. The minutes of the meeting held in November 2014 were then approved.

### **2. First Presentation:**

- The first of the afternoon’s presentations began with a combined effort from Sarah (the ALLIANCE), Joy (Healthy & Happy, a community development trust based in Rutherglen <http://www.healthynhappy.org.uk/>) and Yvonne (a volunteer and service user at Healthy & Happy).
- Sarah highlighted the role of the voluntary sector and volunteers in supporting people in self-management.

- Joy noted there are a number of barriers to self-management, including transport and short-term funding, but in particular noted that for many the biggest issue is confidence and this is where peer-support in the form of a volunteer can be very effective.
- Yvonne, who volunteers in Cambuslang started off as a user of Healthy and Happy's services. Healthy and Happy were able to support her to better manage a long-term health condition, whereas previously she was a frequent visitor to both her GP and A&E, with Healthy and Happy's help her contact with the NHS has dramatically reduced and her overall health and wellbeing has improved. Now in her role as a volunteer she acts as a role model, sharing her experiences with others.
- Yvonne said that her volunteering has also contributed to her overall wellbeing and that she's now in effect a different person. Yvonne highlighted that prior to being a volunteer she was isolated but that volunteering has helped connect her to her community.
- It was noted that the advice volunteers give goes beyond the medical and is often based upon the prior experiences of volunteer, with lots of practical advice and that this is informal support.
- John Mason asked Joy if there were any differences between staff and volunteers at Healthy and Happy, in regards to, for example, their responsibilities. Joy noted that a number of Healthy and Happy's current staff members had actually started as service users, then volunteered on an informal basis before officially becoming a volunteer and then a member of staff as opportunities arose. When it comes to their volunteers Joy said it was all about matching skills, time commitments and the opportunity. It was said categorically that volunteers are not unpaid staff.
- The question was asked if service users felt more comfortable with a volunteer than a member of staff? Joy reflected that in, for example, their group work staff have a particular role in terms of being responsible for the smooth running of the group but the content of discussion was often led by volunteers as peer-based experiences are invaluable. In fact it was noted that the message of self-management has spread primarily due to peer-peer connections.
- Sarah, Joy and Yvonne were asked what kind of relationship their work had with the local hospital and NHS Board. Joy remarked that her organisations relationship with NHS Lanarkshire was good and that Healthy and Happy often received referrals from the board. However, much of this was due to the time taken to develop the trusting relationship.
- Work related to social prescribing and hospital discharges were also highlighted.
- In regards to relations with funders, including the NHS, Yvonne expressed her view that it would be far more valuable for funders to talk directly to volunteers and service users in the first instance, as opposed to making excessive reporting demands as this experience was far more valuable.
- It was asked if the speakers felt the NHS learning from the work of the sector and changing their attitude/approach to care? The answer was yes but slowly.

### **3. Second Presentation**

- John MacDonald from the Community Transport Association then gave a short presentation to the group. John stated that most often community transport groups form when there is no public transport available, but he also noted that community

transport also provides services that are, for example, adapted for disabled users (where public transport is not).

- John noted that in a number of community transport organisations everyone is a volunteer but typically it's usually a small number of paid staff support but a cohort of volunteers.
- John raised a particular concern around the need for volunteer drivers who passed their test after 1997(?) to have a D1 license in order to drive a minibus. Given that this is an expensive and time-consuming test this is making it difficult to recruit younger drivers and also means year on year the pool of potential volunteer drivers becomes smaller. This is an issue not just for community transport but for any organisation from a youth group to a school. It was noted the D1 is largely a European issue and the difference between attitudes to volunteering and volunteers on the Continent and the UK were noted.
- John also spoke about the recent decline in public transport coinciding with tighter eligibility rules for ambulances which has affected large numbers of people trying to get to hospital for appointments. However, despite this demand there is a lack of coordination between community transport organisations and the NHS.
- It was noted that not many community transport organisations receive a 'firm' deal. When CTA surveyed its members 40% said they can only predict a year into the future raising issues about the sustainability of services.

#### **4. Discussion and Q&A**

- Thorough discussion and a number of questions took place following the presentations however further points were raised.
- The role of the sector and volunteers in health and social care integration was then discussed. How the role of the sector was monitored, consistency in approach across Scotland and parity of esteem were all raised.
- The 10 year compact between Edinburgh Council and Volunteer Centre Edinburgh was highlighted as were the complexities of managing volunteers. It was noted that in different departments across the council the role of volunteers was not universally understood. At times there is a need to legitimise the role of the volunteer to staff.
- Although staff and volunteers can have similar roles sometimes the difference is in that while staff work with many users, volunteers tend to interact more on a one-to-one basis.
- The expectation of a third sector provider to look more like and operate more like a public sector organisation is totally counterintuitive.
- Organisations can be very prescriptive about volunteering opportunities.
- The key message was that volunteers are not free labour!

#### **7. Action Points and Date of Next Meeting**

- The group agreed two actions:
  1. The CPG will write to Alex Neil in his new capacity as Minister for Social Justice, Communities & Pensioners' Rights about the current nature of volunteering in Scotland, the groups concerns about plateauing numbers of volunteers and the lack of update to the Volunteer Strategy.

2. The CPG will write to Shona Robison in her role as Health Minister to highlight its concerns about the role of the voluntary sector in health and social care integration and the wider role of the sector in the 2020 Vision.

Both letters will include an invitation for the Minister to attend a meeting of the CPG to hear more on these issues.

- **The next meeting of the CPG will take place on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March at 18:00.**

#### **8. Any Other Competent Business**

None