



## Scottish Third Sector Research Forum meeting

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020: 10:30 – 1 pm

Zoom meeting

### Minutes

#### **In attendance:**

Steven Marwick (ESS), Jane Marryat (ESS), Kat Macapagal (ESS), Hazel Robertson (Robertson Trust), Amy Calder (YouthLink Scotland), Kathie Nicolson (Cattanach), Debbie Maltman (Volunteer Scotland), Rebecca McGregor (Inclusion Scotland), Jane Cullingworth (VSSN), Louise Meikleham (OSCR), Steve Grozier (SCVO), Sarah Weakley (Policy Scotland), Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed (Coalition of Carers), Fiona McHardy (Poverty Alliance), Dinah Aitken (SMC), Rebecca Sludden (Public Health Scotland, speaker), Irina McLean (NHS Research Scotland, speaker)

#### **Apologies:**

Lucy Mulvagh (ALLIANCE), Andrew Dey (ACOSVO), Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Laura Robertson (Poverty Alliance), Allison Mathews (NLCF), Amy Whitehouse (Children in Scotland), Mark Meiklejohn (SG), Alasdair Rutherford, Elaine Wilson (Corra Foundation), Karen McArdle (University of Aberdeen), Ruth McKenna (Waverley Care), Kerry Musselbrook (Iriss), Cathy Bulley (Queen Margaret University)

Note: Liz Ravalde (SG) joined the first 20 minutes but had technical difficulties and could not re-join.

#### **Welcome and introductions**

1. Steven welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting.

**Action:** Kat to update website with list of current members

#### **Minutes and matters arising**

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020) were approved.

**Action:** Kat to upload minutes on website

#### **Role of Forum in relation to Covid-19**

3. Steve introduced the SCVO Strategic Oversight group which brings together stakeholders who want to learn about the impact of Covid-19 on the third sector, and the impact the sector has made through its response to the pandemic. Members of the core group include representatives from the third sector, Scottish Government, OSCR, Policy Scotland, funders and academics. The group is still in the early stages of coordinating Covid-19 research from the third sector. The group is focused on the impact of the

pandemic on the third sector itself, rather than the impact of the pandemic on service users.

Amy, Rebecca and Fiona shared that they may have relevant research from their organisations that they can forward to the oversight group.

4. **Action: Amy, Rebecca and Fiona** to send research that may potentially be relevant to the SCVO Strategic Oversight Group to **Jane M.**

**Members** to get in touch with **Jane M.** if they produce relevant research in the future.

5. **Sarah** talked about the Policy Scotland- TSRF joint webinar event in August 12, [Priorities for the 'New Normal': Lessons from lockdown research](#). The event featured brief presentations from academics and third sector researchers around Covid-19. The event report and evaluation are now available on the Policy Scotland website. Policy Scotland would like to continue this collaboration with the forum and forum members, and welcome ideas for future webinars from members. An initial idea for the next webinar is around the theme of ethics which the forum members have been discussing in subgroups from previous meetings. Policy Scotland is also open to blog contributions about what the third sector is doing as organisations are moving out of the crisis phase.

Sarah shared that participants fed back that third sector organisations and academics were getting very similar results from their research. Participants were pleased that they were able to connect with each other through the event.

6. **Jane C.** shared that a theme that emerged from the VSSN conference was how innovative the third sector has been during the pandemic. There was talk about how to keep the benefits of this way of working as we move out of the crisis phase. This might be a theme for a future Policy Scotland, as it can be linked to current research and policy implications.
7. Members agreed that the above is a good theme and relates to efforts from the third sector to capture learning and evidence from this Covid-19 period, such as the Build Back Better campaign from SCVO.
8. **Action: Members** to get in touch with **Sarah** for Policy Scotland webinar ideas and potential blog contributions.

### **Ethical frameworks**

9. **Irina Mclean, NHS Research Scotland** talked about her role in developing the Social Care Research Governance Framework (SCRGF) for social care-based research. For the past three years her work has been asking the question, 'Where does social care research sit in Scotland?'. This has been affected by the pandemic. She talked about how the NHS is not always able to accommodate social care research projects, just as universities are not always able to provide expertise for these projects. She

cited examples of research activities with particular ethical implications, e.g. research or evaluation involving vulnerable groups.

She stressed the importance of setting high standards in conducting social care research. Currently, only 4 out of 32 local authorities in Scotland have clear ethical pathways for research projects. In some cases the lack of a standard framework has meant not being able to pursue a research project. There is a need to build the issue of ethics into official health and social care strategies in the next few years.

*Liz leaves meeting*

10. **Rebecca Sludden, Public Health Scotland** talked about her role in developing a Research Governance Framework for NHS Health Scotland (which later merged with other groups under Public Health Scotland). Efforts to create this framework began around 2013 in response to the kind of research NHS Health Scotland was doing. They found that the existing research governance frameworks at that time (e.g. Department of Health) were limited to clinical research. They gathered ethical research frameworks from other sources, such as Iriss, third sector organisations and academia to make Health Scotland's Research Governance Framework fit for their purpose. They also created a working group within Health Scotland with different types of expertise like data analysis and evaluation to sense-check the framework. She pointed to two issues they struggled with in developing the framework: (1) the scope of the framework and (2) the importance of language. The group took a year to develop the proposal for the framework, which also included a proposal for the need for an ethics review process and an internal ethics review.

In developing the ethics review process and internal review, the group borrowed from academic research and set out to identify high-risk research. They developed yes or no questions rather than open-ended question for high risk research and decided that only high-risk research would then undergo an ethical internal review. For the internal review, they formed an internal cross-organisational Research Development Group with members that offered different kinds of expertise. The Research Development Group had two roles: (1) Support the implementation of the governance framework (2) To promote a positive research environment.

It took about four years before the framework was tested on commissioned research, and another year for it to be tested on non-commissioned research. Rebecca shared that her main learning is that it is important to get management support and colleague buy-in for the process.

Rebecca clarified that the framework sought to benefit those who are conducting the research so that any risks are flagged early. In terms of benefits to the participants, the framework helps reassure them that the research has been reviewed and any risks to them are minimised.

11. **Action: Rebecca** to share the framework and ethical review checklist to the forum in confidence as these are not public documents.

## **Ethical frameworks**

12. Members split into breakout groups to discuss third sector ethics research questions.
13. In summary the groups fed back the following points:
  - Members liked the idea of a set of simple principles that allows third sector organisations to say what matters to them. A new ethical framework might overlap with existing frameworks and other relevant policies (eg PVG) so ethical principles might be better – nothing too onerous but something we can definitely draw from
  - There are questions about what kinds of risks need to be managed, and who is asking questions about these risks (e.g. risk of taking part in research, versus risk of publishing findings)
  - Creating ethical principles could help address practitioner anxiety, and can help bridge academic and third sector organisations
  - There is a need for an ethics toolkit that shares practical support such as identifying expertise
  - The toolkit should be easy to update or add to
  - Members also raised the issue of ethical data sharing and digital inclusion/exclusion
  - Members pointed out how the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic should be considered in thinking about ethics, e.g. the emergence of new 'high risk' groups
  - The ethical principles that the forum aims to develop should be co-produced with those who will be using the research
  - These ethical principles may be useful to students, academics, funders and regulators. Forum members can share with these groups how they can use these principles in practice later on.
14. **Amy, Fiona and Kathie** volunteered to join an ethics subgroup focused on commissioning research, doing research, and the protection of researchers themselves who are doing the research.
15. **Action: Jane** to set meeting with the subgroup before the next TSRF meeting.  
**Action: Shubhanna** to email Jane with links to existing information about support for care workers that may be useful to the subgroup.

*10 minute break*

### **Kathie Nicolson, Cattanach**

16. Kathie introduced the history of Cattanach and the kind of work they support. In 2011, the organisation decided to focus on funding Early Years research. They are able to offer around £450k small grants per annum, and £200k for more strategic grant-making. Cattanach funds organisations whose work takes place in Scotland. Their grantees are organisations that help families with children from pre-birth to three years old affected by deprivation, they actively strive to involve carers in creating nurture bonds and developing parenting skills. Cattanach takes a strengths/asset-based approach in supporting their grantees, encouraging them to lever people's

skills rather than weaknesses. Cattanach has a broad range of memberships, such as with the Children in Need Scotland, Scottish Grantmakers, and SCVO. Their current partnerships include the William Grant Foundation, Parent-Infant Foundation, 20:20 vision, Carnegie UK, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the David Hume Foundation. Cattanach is also currently working with Children in Scotland to review their funding criteria, which brings in the perspective of young people.

Cattanach has recently commissioned research as part of the First 1001 Days Movement and through their partnership with Parent-Infant Foundation. The project seeks to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the physical and mental health of babies and very young children during the pandemic. Another research project they are funding with Carnegie UK Trust and Children in Scotland is on budgeting for children's well-being, which is focused on a child's first 1001 days within the Scottish budget. Cattanach has also recently commissioned research for two conference papers with members of the Royal Society of Edinburgh: the first aims to consolidate literature on current early years practices in Scotland, while the second aims to consolidate literature about public spending on early years support in Scotland. The reports for these research projects are expected in 2021. They are hoping to use the research to impact policy and action in the future.

*Sarah leaves meeting*

## **Research updates from members**

### 17. **Shubhanna (Coalition of Carers)**

We produced a report in July which highlighted that people with support needs and Unpaid Carers have not been able to use their self-directed support care budgets flexibly during Covid. The link is here:  
<https://twitter.com/CarersCoalition/status/1284110134273245185?s=20>

**Action: Kat** to publish in newsletter

*Shubhanna leaves meeting*

### 18. **Debbie (Volunteer Scotland)**

Recent Volunteer Scotland research publications include:

- [Volunteering, health and wellbeing in Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#) – analysis of the relationship between volunteering and a range of social indicators across the different geographies in Greater Glasgow and Clyde
- [Young People and Volunteering in Scotland, 2019](#) – this builds on our earlier studies with Ipsos-Mori in 2014 and 2016 to provide insights on volunteering by secondary school pupils across Scotland. This will fill a vital evidence gap missing from the SHS.
- [Volunteering during COVID-19](#) – this is Volunteer Scotland's landing page for all of its publications relating to COVID-19. It includes

commissioned research with Ipsos-Mori and deep mining of other data sources such as the Third Sector Interface Survey.

**Action: Kat** to publish in newsletter

19. **Hazel (The Robertson Trust)**

**Maternal Mental Health & Substance Abuse**

The Robertson Trust are working with the Perinatal Mental Health Managed Clinical Network (MCN) to tender a new piece of research. The aim of this research is to contribute to the evidence-base on effective interventions for women who have both maternal mental health and substance abuse issues. The research will examine how the non-statutory third sector can support women at different stages in the maternity lifecycle. We are particularly interested in the how third-sector non-statutory services work with statutory services like the NHS and social work services. Where are the gaps and overlaps between these two sectors and how does that support women affected by these issues? We are currently in the process of appointing a steering group and tendering for an external researcher. For more information on this research please contact [Eve](#) our Social Impact Manager.

**Action: Kat** to publish in newsletter

20. **Jane C. (VSSN)**

VSSN successfully ran their annual conference online (7-8 September). Some of the key headlines that emerged are: positive stories about the impact of the sector during the pandemic, issues about lack of funding hampered crisis response, improved ways of working, relationships with mutual aid groups, some debate about whether we are in already in recovery, differences in responses in Scotland compared to England, the question of how to maintain the 'crisis spirit' in normal times. There was also discussion about how Zoom has been used by the sector.

VSSN has been hosting bi-monthly networking opportunities online, particularly for early career researchers but this is open to all. They have an event on 24 September, 1-2pm, looking at innovative ways to disseminate research.

Jane C. is also currently doing research on the impact of Covid-19 on people with disabilities for her role in Glasgow University.

21. **Amy (YouthLink Scotland)**

Their report on the impact of universal youth work on young people will be published in October. They used a method called 'transformative evaluation' – a reflective conversation between young people and youth workers. These stories will be part of the publication.

They also used transformative evaluation for online research during Covid-19, looking at the impact that engagement with LGBT Youth Scotland has had on young people. They have collected 22 stories on this and are aiming to publish in November.

Youth Link also partnered with Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot to do a survey called 'Lockdown Lowdown', which is about the impact of the pandemic on young people. As part of that they are doing themed Instagram posts. They have been commissioned to do these surveys in the next few months. Initial reports have already been published.

Youth Link is also currently working with a Master's student from Edinburgh University on research about political literacies. They are providing support for the student's research online.

**Action: Kat** to include information about Lockdown Lowdown in newsletter.  
**Action: Jane** to include conducting research online in future agenda

22. **Steve (SCVO)**

They will be updating their existing Covid-19 evidence library with research published between June and mid-August. This will be shared to the SCVO Oversight Group. They are also currently working on providing evidence for parliament elections next year.

23. **Dinah (SMC)**

They have been helping to promote research by UNICEF, Scottish Government and Edinburgh University called 'In isolation instead of in school (INISS): Young people's experiences of COVID-19 and effects on mental health and education. They have also been helping recruit participants on a study about the interlink between depression and autism.

SMC has started working with a researcher to do a comparative study between the second quarter of this year and last year about the service they have been providing – this will probably be shared internally.

SMC will also be evaluating their [Back to School toolkit](#) which they launched during lockdown– this will be finishing by the end of the year.

They have been starting to prepare for the Salvesen Lecture in November which will be around research on neurodiversity. More details will be provided in the next forum meeting.

24. **Rebecca (Inclusion Scotland)**

- In July Inclusion Scotland published findings from our survey on experiences of shielding during the Covid-19 crisis. The report can be viewed here - <https://inclusionScotland.org/shielding-report/>
- We conducted a survey on experiences of social care support during the pandemic – results of this have still to be published.

- We are starting to organise an online event to mark the end of DRILL – hopefully it will be at the end of September but date and time to be confirmed.

**Action: Kat** to include first item (on shielding report) above in newsletter

25. **Louise (OSCR)**

- **COVID-19 impact on charities survey**

Following the publication of a summary of the key findings on 5 June we published the complete findings from our survey on the impact of COVID-19 on Scottish charities along with a basic charts tool to help visualise the impact on different groups. The detailed findings allowed us to develop a much better understanding of how the earlier stages of the pandemic and lockdown measures affected different charities. You can read the **report and access the data tables here**.

Additional analysis was carried out to prepare a social enterprise dataset. Survey responses were matched to 774 charities included in the Social Enterprise Scotland Census 2019. A full set of data tables for the complete survey has been produced and is available on request.

We are in the early stages of planning to contact charities again in November to update the findings. Areas of interest include the nature of the impact on beneficiaries and the financial and operational outlook beyond 12 months.

We are very grateful to third sector research colleagues for helping us to shape the survey. We are keen to use the experience to help us make changes to how we organise and analyse charity sector data in order to maximise its usefulness for others too.

- **Scottish Charity and Public Surveys 2020**

We have recently published the findings of our **Scottish Charity and Public Surveys 2020**. The fieldwork for these bi-annual surveys was undertaken between February and March this year before the full extent of the pandemic, but there are important insights for OSCR and how we work with charities to maintain trustworthiness.

The headline finding is that trust and confidence in charities increased significantly in 2020 compared to the 2018 findings. In addition to measuring trust and confidence the research explored the overall factors that drive trust and sought views from the public and charities to help us understand which aspects of OSCR's role were most important in building and maintaining trustworthiness. The findings recognised direct transparency, such as seeing a positive impact made using donations, and administrative accountability, such as being open with accounts and internal processes, as key.

Join Judith Turbyne and Louise Meikleham from OSCR for a webinar from 12-1pm on 29 October to explore the findings and what they mean for charities and regulation. **Book your place here**.

**Action: Kat** to include newsletter

26. **Fiona (Poverty Alliance)**

They have waived their membership fee for organisations with an annual income of under £500,000.

Challenge Poverty Week will take place online in November, members are welcome to get in touch if they have any relevant research.

They published research at the end of June on flexible timetables for young people in education: See [Exploring the use of Flexible Educational Arrangements in Fife](#).

They are due to publish research on the following topics in the next few weeks: mental health and employability (with the Health Foundation), guidance on how to involve people in poverty research (with the Poverty and Equality Commission), and the Knowledge is Power project (with SCDC) which is on community-led action research.

27. **Prof. Karen McArdle (University of Aberdeen, shared via email)**

Five colleagues from the North East of Scotland came together to discuss community work and, after much discussion and cake and coffee, it resulted in a book. The book which targets an international audience as well as Scottish community workers focuses on **"The Impact of Community Work: How to gather evidence"**. We brought to the book a range of backgrounds including the third sector, CLD policy, ESOL practice, local government, health and social care, academia and leadership practice in CLD and this worked very well. We are now planning a further book, which looks at theory and practice post-Freire and are excited by the learning we have derived from thinking and writing about our practice. The book combines theory, practice and case studies from our work.

See: McArdle, K., Briggs, S., Forrester, K., Garrett, E., Mackay, C. et al (July, 2020). The Impact of Community Work: How to gather evidence. <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/the-impact-of-community-work>

28. **ACOSVO (shared via email)**

**Focussing on Intelligence, Renewal, Recovery, Sustainability and Collaboration**

ACOSVO is underpinned by the ethos of peer support, good practice sharing and leadership development. As the current crisis unfolded, we quickly developed to a new way of providing this support.

Since 16th March until end of June, a total of 64 Zoom support engagements took place. Leaders from 327 organisations took part, with 51% participating in more than one call. This has resulted in 878 individual dial-ins, with the average people on one call being 14 and the maximum number being 54. These calls have been logged and analysed and have given us a wealth of

data on the challenges and opportunities faced by sector leaders through this period. Call topics have shifted from an initial sentiment of confusion and feeling overwhelmed with the challenge and the amount of information, as well as the logistics of moving organisations to remote working. As the weeks progressed, the practicalities of people management, financial challenges and beneficiary support have come to the fore with a strong emphasis on wellbeing. More recent conversations have started to highlight future thinking and CO wellbeing as well as strengthening collaboration and challenging the norm. Our [Insights](#) reports give more details and our [case studies](#) give more depth.

Feedback has shown that this support and the opportunities to learn, share and be supported in a safe space has been invaluable to sector leaders in building their resilience, skills and confidence to meet the current challenges.

ACOSVO has risen to this challenge by quickly adapting and providing this support, but also by developing this new strand of work on intelligence gathering.

Much of our work with leaders now is on renewal, recovery, sustainability and collaboration. This fits well with a research project recently started by ACOSVO's CEO who is exploring "Resilient leadership in the third sector in Scotland", through a 3-year DBA (Doctor of Administration). This work has ongoing benefits throughout the study and is informing thinking and building capacity in our work supporting sector leaders through current times.

This work aims to both document the current challenges and opportunities and explore learning and insights into enhancing resilience for sector leaders as we move into the future.

**Action: Kat** to include newsletter

29. **Children in Scotland (shared via email)**

**Health Inequalities Peer Research Project**

We worked with 15 young peer researchers to look at what helped and hindered health and wellbeing in their own communities (Dundee and Glasgow). It was funded by the Wellcome Trust and worked in partnership with University of Edinburgh. Link to the report and videos below.  
<https://childreninscotland.org.uk/health-inequalities-participative-research-project/>

**Action: Kat** to include in newsletter

30. **AOCB**

Members agreed next meeting to be scheduled in the morning.

**Next meeting:** 1 December 2020 via zoom 10.30am – 1pm