



## Scottish Third Sector Research Forum meeting

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021: 10:30 – 12.30 pm on Zoom

### Minutes

#### In attendance:

Steven Marwick (ESS), Jane Marryat (ESS), Amy Calder (YouthLink Scotland), Jane Cullingworth (VSSN), Ilse Mackinnon (SCVO), Louise Meikleham (OSCR), Dharmveer Singh (SG), Kate Robinson (NLCF), Lucy Mulvagh (The ALLIANCE), Amy Woodhouse (Children in Scotland), Hazel Robertson (The Robertson Trust), Alasdair Rutherford (University of Stirling), Pat Armstrong (ACOSVO)

#### Apologies:

Steve Grozier (SCVO), Debbie Maltman (Volunteer Scotland), Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Dinah Aitken (SMC), Amy Baker (Cattanach Trust), Laura Robertson (Poverty Alliance), Fiona McHardy (Poverty Alliance), Cassy Rutherford (The Robertson Trust) Elaine Wilson (Corra Foundation), Sarah Weakley (Policy Scotland), Karen McArdle (University of Aberdeen), Rebecca McGregor (Inclusion Scotland), Liz Ravalde (SG), Jennifer Goff (Waverley Care), Cathy Bulley (Queen Margaret University), Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed (Coalition of Carers), Kerry Musselbrook (Iriss).

#### Welcome and introductions

1. Steven welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting.

#### Minutes and matters arising

2. The minutes of the previous meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were approved.  
**Action:** Jane to [upload minutes](#) on website.
3. No matters arising. But Steven reminded members about Julia Green's request for feedback about the Public Health Covid-19 repository (para.31 of June minutes).

#### Update on TSRF work

4. The 4<sup>th</sup> Policy Scotland/TSRF event took place on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 called Demystifying research ethics in the third sector. This event was in the ethics guide dissemination plan. 60 signed up, 38 attended at some point and 22 remained at the end of the event. Our experience is that there is always a drop off when the event breaks into discussion groups. The speakers were Jane Marryat introducing the guide and research principles, Fiona McHardy and Laura Robertson from Poverty Alliance on how they had applied the principles to their research, and Amy Calder from YouthLink and Neil Davidson from Scottish Government talking about developing a research policy. There was a good response to the guide – people said it explained ethics well, was pragmatic and practical. Links to recorded presentations and slides are on [TSRF](#) and Policy Scotland websites.
5. If anyone is interested in hearing more about YouthLink's research ethic policy please get in touch with Amy. The policy is with YouthLink's board waiting for approval. After which it will be uploaded to YouthLink's website.

**Action: Amy Calder** will write a blog about her experience of developing a research ethics policy with Scottish Government support from the Analytical Exchange Programme.

**Action: Jane M.** to link to YouthLink's ethics policy once uploaded.

#### Update on ethics guide dissemination

6. We have achieved a wide reach across Scotland by: sending 50 emails to universities – research offices, ethics committee, public engagement staff, funders and third sector organisations. In addition, all conference participants and speakers have received an email, past TSRF members, ESS trustees, staff and some ex-ESS trustees working in third sector, funders and working in academia. We have sent several tweets which have had a good response – 17 retweets and lots of likes. We've received some very enthusiastic feedback especially from universities, particularly good response from University of Glasgow who are making it available to students. We have used events and conferences – flier was sent to VSSN conference and Jane is speaking at [CARNival conference](#) organised by Karen McArdle running from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
7. Jane sent out a communication pack for the guide with examples of email and tweets to all Forum members after the last meeting and asked members to disseminate the guide to your networks, if not done previously.

**Action: All forum members** to use communications pack to disseminate ethics guide to your networks.

#### **February 2022 event**

8. Jane presented her paper on proposed content and format of another event to continue the conversation about ethics focusing on different areas.
9. The Forum thought all items sounded worthwhile and likely to lead to rich discussions. The challenge will be to meet people's expectations if these sessions are run in parallel.
10. Lucy shared her experiences from research on people's experience of Self-directed Support that raised issues around how data is presented, used and acted on. Issues included: (1) managing anonymity versus excluding people altogether; (2) the challenge of sharing negative findings with the public sector; and (3) the challenge of including a case study that was already in the public domain, and so almost impossible to anonymise. The Forum agreed this raised important ethical topics to pursue at the event.
11. Pat suggested focusing on what is different about the third sector. What are the different things to think about if its third sector ethics? For example, if you are a researcher and practitioner the need to be clear about which 'hat' you are wearing when researching. The Forum agreed there were lots of useful issues about practitioner researchers that could be the focus for another event?
12. Jane C. suggested exploring tensions within organisations between research and policy teams and communications teams who are looking for bite-sized

quotes for fund raising purposes. For working with students – what if the research findings are difficult for the TS host organisation and what are the ethics about how you deal with that, how much do you do upfront when planning the research and getting consent i.e. who owns the data? And the issue of the interpretative authority of the researcher.

13. Louise M. suggested additional subjects to explore - Why does this matter? How do you get buy in? How do you explain to people that are not involved? And generally, an opportunity to share experiences of tricky issues, there's no absolute 'right' answer, lots of people in sector are grappling with and working out best practice – should be weaved into the event.
14. Amy C. talked about expanding the event to cover discussions about support mechanisms for researchers in the third sector. Where to go for informal support? Perhaps like an informal network – 'come and share your ethical dilemma'. The event was well timed to undertake a consultation about how to support researchers in the sector generally. Steven said that Jane M. will be retiring at the end of March 2022 and a review of the TSRF will take place and this could be part of that.
15. Amy W. liked the idea of support network for ethical dilemmas and added a suggestion about receipt of consistent and regular requests from academic institutions to provide young children and young adults for their research. How to say no when it is not an appropriate ask? Children in Scotland has produced a template to access their response to requests.
16. Alasdair suggested caution around making rules of thumb, eg about anonymity and it was better to frame in terms of making risk-based decisions. Having examples and discussions are really help. Conference should be focused on *how to think about getting the right answer for you*.
17. Format: Jane C. said the VSSN conference was in person but there were half the usual participants. We would get more people online but networking is less effective. One suggestion was to run it as part of The Gathering however the event slots are only for one hour. SCVO is surveying people's attitudes about attendance at The Gathering.
18. In summary the Forum agreed:
  - this is a worthwhile event which will lead to helpful conversations
  - it should be a discursive event with lots of shared experiences and examples
  - we should look at how we can continue these conversations and future support network.

**Action:** Steven and Jane M. will work up a programme for an event on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and decide on format for event.

**Action:** Ilse to inform Jane M. when Gathering survey results are completed.

### **Ethics of sharing research data**

19. Steven spoke to circulated paper. Data sharing was not fully covered in the ethics guide and we decided to explore this issue this year. Discussions

started last meeting (June) and two key issues have surfaced, firstly what do we mean by research data (is it only data collected for purposes of research) or other types, and what are we sharing? Secondly, the risk of replicating GDPR. We need to think what value the Forum can add.

20. Alasdair suggested we would want to include administrative data especially for TSOs who have done a survey and then matched in some administrative data about who used the services. He suggested the guidance should focus on data collected for research purposes but not exclude data collected for other purposes such as administrative data. He agreed that we should avoid replicating GDPR but said that there is an exemption for research data which may not be well known so the guidance could include what the exemption does and doesn't include and how it changes how you handle the data.
21. Louise M. talked about the variety of data sharing agreements from contracts to FOIs. A practical part of the guidance could be examples of different data sharing agreements for different types of data. Also a glossary/jargon buster would be useful i.e. what is a data sharing agreement? What is a privacy policy and privacy impact assessment? What is GDPR and how does it relate to research? What do you need to know before you share your data? Market Research Code of conduct might be useful to look at.
22. Pat talked about self-plagiarism. At what point is it ok to share your own findings before publication? As a practitioner researcher when is it data that you would have picked up in your day job and not through your research.
23. Lucy – shared an example of The Alliance having to decide whether to share early research findings with Scottish Government and ethical issues raised.
24. Amy W. suggested that the guidance should reflect UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
25. Ilse agreed with what has been said but pointed out that some of this is good practice rather than ethics. Perhaps we should use an alternative word to ethics in the guidance.
26. Steven suggested as there was a lot to explore that we should not rush to write guidance but continue to explore the issues at further meetings. We should do some more desk research and following more conversations in the Forum co-produce guidance.

**Action:** Steven and Jane M. will write up suggestions and do more desk research using your suggestions.

### **Working with students**

27. Members discussed their experiences of working with students. In summary some of the points raised were as follows:
28. Some member had mixed experience of working with students. Some need a lot of support and sometimes there discrepancy between what the organisation needed and what the student wanted for their dissertations.

Getting the right match is key. It is important to be clear who their supervisor is and what the outcome is.

29. Q Step students from University of Glasgow can be excellent, especially when they had prior experience of an office environment. These students have induction, support, and regular supervision. Outputs were good and helpful. Overlapping students was good because they gave peer support.
30. Masters students doing dissertations can be good but the timeframe is short. The students' research has gone through their institutes ethical committees for ethical approval. However it can be helpful if the third sector staff who are supervising are themselves Master's level or above to understand the student's criteria for their dissertation.
31. Reference was made to the [ScotGen](#) scheme – medical students who want to know more about social prescribing.
32. Jane C said there is push from universities to do collaborative dissertations and challenge based dissertations. There's a move for universities to move research into work places. The Forum could have a role.
33. Hazel wondered whether there is scope to brokerage in this space. She said the Trust is hoping to disseminate the research findings of their Robertson Scholars so others can benefit.
34. In summary the Forum agreed this is less about ethics and more about good practice in purpose, planning and management.
- 35. Action: Jane** to write up this discussion with the possible aim of turning it into a short infographic, following further discussion.

### **Format of future TSRF meetings**

36. It was agreed that the next TSRF meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 will be on Zoom. We'll decide about the March 2022 meeting in December.
37. *Note: James Chisholm, Masters student with Volunteer Scotland was unable to attend the meeting*
38. **Pat Armstrong from ACOSVO** talked about her PhD research – Resilience in third sector leadership in Scotland. Paper attached separately.

*Dharmveer left the meeting.*

### **39. Research updates from members**

40. Alasdair – University of Stirling  
Is involved in the following projects:
  - Mobilising UK Voluntary Action <https://www.mvain4.uk/>
  - Assessing financial vulnerability and risk in the UK's charities during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis  
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/tsrc/research/assessing->

financial-vulnerability-and-risk-in-the-uks-charities-during-and-beyond-the-covid-19-crisis.aspx

*Alasdair left the meeting.*

41. Amy Calder - YouthLink

Please share our survey on what it's like to be a young person in Scotland, for 11-25 year olds exploring gender identities, relationships and risky behaviours <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/september-2021/what-it-is-like-being-a-young-person-in-scotland-today-survey-for-young-people/>

I am developing a youth-led research bid about supporting young people to navigate fake news and misinformation. This is in the early stages of development, if you would be interested in discussing further or forming a partnership please contact me [acalder@youthlinkscotland.org](mailto:acalder@youthlinkscotland.org)

*Amy C. left the meeting.*

42. Kate – The National Lottery Community Fund

Continues to work with VSS to capture learning on prevention on homelessness.

43. Jane C. – VSSN

Next VSSN event is on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021 format to be decided. Looking at research as activism.

44. Louise – OSCR

**What charities told us: November COVID-19 survey open responses**

We have published a review of charities' open responses to our November COVID-19 impact survey. Many experiences, thoughts and comments were shared. We asked charities what they had learned and what support they needed. The findings reflect the diversity of Scottish charities and show that the impact and experiences of the pandemic were widely varied. [Read the Open Responses Introduction and Overview here.](#)

The full findings cover:

- Funding and Fundraising
- How charities adapted to the pandemic
- What charities learned
- What charities asked for help with
- Places and Spaces
- Volunteers and Trustees.
- More information can be found on our [Surveys page](#).

**Action: Jane M.** to put above items in newsletter

**OSCR Data and Research** - we are planning to bring together our data and research resources in one place on the OSCR website to make it easier to access facts, figures and knowledge. This will include our open data, charity map, surveys page and more. We will update you at the next meeting.

**Charity and public surveys 2022** - we are in the early planning stages for our Public and Charity Surveys 2022. The surveys are commissioned every two years and aim to:

- measure public trust and confidence in charities
- measure awareness of and attitudes towards charity regulation (including OSCR)
- help us understand the issues facing charities
- explore the perception of OSCR and charity regulation amongst charities

We use these surveys to improve our work and our understanding of the sector, as well as provide key performance indicators. The fieldwork will should take place around February 2022.

We had a discussion with the Fraser of Allander Institute about their use of OSCR data for two projects:

- The economic impact of charitable organisations
- Social Enterprise Data Infrastructure

They are approaching the economic contribution of charitable organisations project using a similar methodology to other industrial classifications, but are finding challenges when applying this to charity data. The social enterprise project includes analysis of COVID funding support per organisation and per local authority. It was great to hear about their approach to the sector data. I think they have already been in touch with other forum members, and may be in touch with more in future.

45. Hazel – Robertson Trust

Commissioned a piece of research from Poverty Alliance to understand the landscape of poverty interventions. This has been reported on and has had a good response especially from the education field. As a result of the research Robertson Trust have decided to focus on mentoring and training and have asked P.A. to research the impact of these interventions on the difference made to the attainment gap. Hoping to publish the review in October.

They are working on how Robertson Trust support their grantholders and the wider sector. Have completed a survey but results are not currently ready for publication.

46. Amy Woodhouse – Children in Scotland

Have funding for a piece of research for 4 peer researchers exploring what good participation in research looks like for young people. A call for case studies has just closed.

Emerging minds special interest group has been looking at the impact of live music on children and young people's mental health. This research is a collaboration between CIS, Scottish Ensemble, SG Mental Health Directorate, University of Stirling, Changing your world CIS advisory group. Please get in touch with Amy for further details.

CIS are developing a new evaluation framework. Amy asked the Forum to share any guidance and experience from other organisations.

#### Ilse – SCVO

Findings from longitudinal research on 'the impact of Covid-19 and what's next' should be ready for inclusion in the TSRF newsletter.

**Action:** Steve to send Jane M.

47. Anyone interested in sitting on an advisory group for University of Glasgow research on female frontline workers who support women and girls. The research is looking at the impact on their work and home lives. Please let Ilse know.

#### 48. Lucy – The Alliance

Nearly all the reports from [My support, my choice](#) research have been published. The national report has been influential. It was cited in review to adult social care and influenced in the new national SDS standards that Social work Scotland have developed. There is now a new pilot project with 3 areas in Scotland looking at what standards will look like in practice.

They have been approached by many academic partners to be involved in the impact of Covid-19 research funding bids which have not been funded but are involved in an NIH (National Institutes of Health) funded research led by UCL called C or See cade and me??? about inequalities. Mainly research is taking place in England.

Peer research partnership with Strathclyde University and Health Scotland is going well. Peer researcher Derek has been talking to lots of people about the merits of peer research. A piece of research with Health Scotland will shortly be published about inclusion health work – seldom heard voices about their experiences of Covid-19 including women who sell sex, people with lived experience of mental health problems and people experiencing homelessness.

#### 49. Life Changes Trust

Steven meet with Celeste Bertaud, [Life Changes Trust](#) a funder of projects supporting young people with experience of being in care, people living with dementia and unpaid carers of those with dementia. The fund closes next year and they are currently disseminating their learning. They are running a webinar on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 10.30 – 11.30am on 'Exploring Participatory Evaluation' Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/exploring-participatory-evaluation-tickets-169450568211>

50. **AOCB** Steven thank everyone for an interesting meeting and all the suggestions/comments.

51. **Next meeting:** Please note the next meeting will be on **Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021**, via Zoom, **10.30 to 12.30pm**