



Scotland's Third Sector Research Forum meeting

Wednesday 8th March 2022: 10:30 – 12.30 pm on Zoom

Minutes

In attendance:

Steven Marwick (ESS), Jane Marryat (ESS), Amy Calder (YouthLink Scotland), Ilse Mackinnon (SCVO), Steve Grozier (SCVO), Dharmveer Singh (SG), Kate Robinson (NLCF), Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Hazel Robertson (The Robertson Trust), Laura Robertson (Poverty Alliance), Louise Meikleham (OSCR), Hannah Tweed (The ALLIANCE), Amy Woodhouse (Children in Scotland), Pat Armstrong (ACOSVO), Elaine Wilson (Corra Foundation), Gabija Povilaityte (SG), Jennifer Challinor (Crichton Trust),

Apologies:

Jane Cullingworth (VSSN), Fiona McHardy (Poverty Alliance), Cassy Rutherford (The Robertson Trust), Dinah Aitken (SMC), Amy Baker (Cattanach Trust), Debbie Maltman (VS), Alasdair Rutherford (University of Stirling), Karen McArdle (University of Aberdeen), Rebecca McGregor (Inclusion Scotland), Jennifer Goff (Waverley Care), Cathy Bulley (Queen Margaret University), Shubhanna Hussain-Ahmed (Coalition of Carers), Kimberley Summerside (VHS), Kerry Musselbrook (Iriss).

Speaker: Ali Hanbury (National Centre for Research Methods) – was unwell

Welcome and introductions

1. Steven welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting.

Minutes and matters arising

2. The minutes of the previous meeting on 8th December 2021 were approved.

Action: Jane M. to [upload minutes](#) on website.

3. There were no matters arising. As this was Jane Marryat's last TSRF meeting Steven Marwick and the whole TSRF members thanked Jane for her work with TSRF and wished her a happy retirement.

Update of TSRF work

Report on TSRF 2022 conference 'Talking ethics'

4. Jane M. gave an oral report of the TSRF 2022 conference *Talking ethics* on 8th February 2022. 99 had booked, 78 people attended and 60 people (77% of participants) remained for plenary 2. Although the number of people booked for the event was down by a third on 2021 conference those who did attend were very engaged and participated actively in breakout groups. In 2021 it was noticed that substantial number left when a session broke into breakout rooms this was not the case this year.
5. The evaluation survey was completed by 40 people. Overall, the conference evaluated well and feedback was that the conference outcomes were met.

6. When asked what was the best thing about the conference (open question), the most common responses were: hearing and learning from others (30%), high quality and interesting speakers (28%), networking and connecting to others (25%) and discussion (14%). There were several comments about it being well organised and well-paced event.
7. The three parallel sessions were all rated as very relevant or relevant. Participants particularly valued these session's breakout groups as opportunities to share and learn from each other.
8. Plenary 2 (the consultation session went well). Again participants enjoyed the opportunity to connect through discussion. Overall, participants agreed they would like more support with research ethics (75%), and 35% wanted to be involved in a research practitioner network, 22% said maybe. 36 participants asked to be informed about future developments.
9. When asked about improvements to the conference 47% of respondents either gave no answer (n=8) or said nothing (n=11). 20% said they would like more discussion and 4 people (10%) said it would be better in person. One person said that it was hard to hear and that subtitles should have been available. Jane emailed this person after the conference to apologise. We will automatically enable subtitles at future TSRF online events.
10. Jane M. commented that the feedback about networking and connecting was very encouraging as it had been a concern about how to get this facet into an online conference. Some participants commented that they were the only person with a research remit in their organisation. It reinforced people missed contact with other researchers during the pandemic and are keen to connect with others. One person mentioned that the TSRF conference should be a hybrid event in the future capitalising on people attending online who cannot travel to a venue.
11. In discussion, several TSRF members said the conference was well organised and were pleased with the quantity and quality of feedback. Jane was asked if there had been any comments about the theme of the conference. Jane thought that for those who had attended and gave feedback there was a high interest in the topics and some praised the wider perspective on ethics.

Action: Jane M. will share the written report with Forum members and create an infographic to be shared in the next TSRF newsletter.

Update on consultation about support for those researching in third sector

12. Steven and Jane M summarised the content and comments made at the plenary 2 session of the conference which consulted participants on the need for support with ethical research practice. He thanked all TSRF members who facilitated break out discussions and jam boards, and Fiona McHardy for her talk about being a reflective researcher. In general, there was a huge support for the idea and many suggestions. Most participants favoured an informal format where people could share and learn about research practice from each other which may include but not be limited to research ethics.

13. Some of the main points included:
 - The need for a mix of in person spaces to talk and share alongside online forums plus repositories for documents
 - Events could be a mix of opportunities to share learning and build skills.
 - Events need a clear focus and facilitation to keep people on topic and create the safe space.
 - Some expert input valued but the majority of comments suggest informal / peer led is the way to go.
14. Some specifics about the purpose of this included:
 - Bridging across sectors (academic and third sector)
 - Mentoring and building relationships
 - Tackling isolation amongst lone researchers
 - To improve research use – not just doing it
 - Safe space
15. Although conference participants did not identify a need for a formal ethics committee for the third sector, some TSRF members – particularly Poverty Alliance - were interested in exploring the idea.
16. Laura from Poverty Alliance explained their thinking is at an early stage. They are keen to have a more consistent approach to ethics within the organisation. They are developing an ethics guide and application form for a new participatory research project, have been talking to other organisations who have their own ethics approaches and YouthLink and used SG traffic light system for ethics. They would be open discussions with other Forum members about setting up a more formal reviewing group to look at each other's ethics applications. The proposed service from the Social Research Network would be prohibitively expensive.
17. Amy C. said YouthLink has their ethics guide but not a formal ethics committee. She had a paid arrangement with ScotCen who reviewed only part of a research project. She commented that this arrangement would not be affordable for all third sector organisations all the time.
18. Steven said that ESS would not have the resources or expertise to facilitate obviously members could chose to do this themselves.
19. The meeting broke into small discussion groups to discuss 1. Semi-formal processes for ethics approval 2. Broader issues about networking about research practice and sharing research. All of this will feed into the review of the TSRF.
20. The feedback from the discussions was that broadly there wasn't an appetite for a formal ethics process and there were some concerns about competing ethics processes with universities or NHS but a strong agreement for more opportunities to share worries and share experiences with others such as a sounding board, drop in, "phone a friend" arrangement. Laura and Amy C. said they still keen to have a more formal ethics process.

21. Another option raised creating a list of people willing to be on a research advisory group.

Action: TSRF members who are interested in continuing discussions about formal ethics processes to get in touch with Laura and Amy C.

Action: Steven to ensure that more informal arrangements are considered through the TSRF review

TSRF review

22. Steven spoke to the paper circulated in advance. Philippa Bonella will undertake the review. She will present her findings at the next TSRF meeting on 7th June having undertaken interviews and a survey to gain views from Forum and non-Forum members interested in third sector research. She will have access to Forum meeting minutes and information gathered from events. Steven asked for comments from members.

23. Members the importance of getting a wide range of views and discussed how as many people with an interest in the Forum and TS research as possible could be reached. Members suggested there be two types of survey:

- A traditional survey as planned to go to the mailing list.
- A very short 2 or 3 question survey that members themselves could send to their networks and contacts including via social media. Probably aiming at people who may know little about TSRF.

24. Key informant interviews should be divided into people who **do** research, people who **commission** research and people who **use** research (we have some of each of these in the core TSRF so I can think about who is who).

Action: Email Steven if you want to be interviewed by Philippa.

Action: Steven to keep all members informed including providing clear deadlines.

Data sharing

25. Steven spoke to the circulated Data Sharing paper which has pulled together desk top research, discussions in previous Forum meetings and comments from the Data Sharing parallel session at the conference. The purpose of what we are trying to achieve has shifted from initial issues of ethics and processes around data sharing (although that is still important) to promoting the benefits of data sharing.

26. Forum members said that it was good and useful. Ilse had already used some of the content. Members suggested it should also include:

- that we are talking about raw and published data
- how to identify the opportunity to data share as sometimes this happens serendipitously. How do you build relationships/partnerships to data share with appropriate organisations? Making sure you don't miss opportunities.

- the importance of getting views from those whom data is about on what happens when their data is shared.
- the importance of opening up of data as much as possible and ensuring that the data is in an accessible format.
- that communications staff should get permissions to use quotes appropriately.

Action: Steven to circulate for further comments including from Alasdair Rutherford and Debbie Maltman.

Research updates

Vunteer Scotland (Matthew)

27. 'The Road to Recovery' report was published by Volunteer Scotland on 28 Feb 2022. The culmination of two years' research on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering in Scotland, it identifies the 'lessons learned' and how to improve Scotland's preparedness for future crisis; and also how to capture the innovation and good practice during 'steady state'.
<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/research-and-evaluation/publications/covid-19-research/the-road-to-recovery/>

YouthLink Scotland (Amy C.)

28. Working on 'What it's like being a boy/young man in Scotland' and written report which will be available at end of March 2022. This research involved 1200 people involved.
29. She will be starting to work on youth work's role in responding and recovery of Covid 19 in the next few weeks until Dec 2022. It will also think about preparedness for any future pandemics.
30. YouthLink are having a masters student on placement May – Aug 2022 to look into the role of youth work in the education system. A blog will be written at the end of the placement. (Not for newsletter)

SCVO

31. Ilse – Working on sector stats and finalising the paper focussed on the diversity of the sector including community groups doing work particularly in health and sport using data sourced from third sector intermediaries.
32. Steve – is working on third sector tracker – the data tables for second wave are complete and a one-page infographic is being produced. This will be uploaded to SCVO website next week. Steve is reviewing a paper on first 2 waves. SG colleagues have been analysing the qualitative questions. This will be uploaded next month. The fieldwork for third wave will be starting in two weeks.

ACOSVO (Pat)

33. ACOSVO has published their study on wellbeing, succession and diversity study <https://acosvo.org.uk/resources/wellbeing-succession> which shows that 53% of leaders in the third sector in Scotland are planning to leave the sector in the next 5 years and of those 71% will leave in the next 2 years.

34. ACOSVO is having a student in May to look at transition into and out of the third sector in Scotland, picking up on the findings of the report. Pat is aiming to submit her thesis on resilience in third sector leadership in Scotland by September 2022. She is leaving her post in June 2022

NLCF (Kate)

35. Has three more staff in her team and are starting to work with grant holders looking at participatory grant making, reviewing grant holder support and work more specifically around food. (Not for newsletter)

Corra (Elaine)

36. A group of funders has commissioned research to look at reserves in third sector organisations. How to utilise them, what are TSO's reserves policy. The findings will improve funder practice. The report will be published in June and there will be a dissemination event at The Gathering in June 2022. (Not for newsletter)

OSCR (Louise)

37. Currently undertaking fieldwork for the public charity surveys. Quantitative research closed last week which had a good response – 1499 from public research done by panel and 2341 responses for charities survey. The public focus groups are happening now and this time there seems to be a high awareness of charities. Probably due to the pandemic when charities had a high profile. Headline findings by end of March. The report will be published by June 2022. (Not for newsletter)

Children in Scotland (Amy W.)

38. Findings from research in partnership with Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research on engaging children and young people with data is due to be published in April. The project will explore how we can make data and research about children's lives more relevant and engaging for them, viewing them as audiences for research as well as participants.
39. CiS has been researching the impact of live music on mental health of young people. A briefing paper showing the results of focus groups has been published. Live Music and Mental Health 2021 Workshops summary - https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EM_Workshops-Summary-final-2021.pdf
40. Amy recommended the [State of children's rights](#) report which CiS has contributed to has recently been published by Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's rights). This includes case studies on how child rights have been implemented.

Poverty Alliance (Laura)

41. Funded by Inspiring Scotland's Equality and Human Rights Fund, the Poverty Alliance's [Rights in Action](#) project will support organisations to use human rights-based approaches to address poverty and support people with experience of poverty to use their rights and be heard by decision makers. The Poverty Alliance will be working with our member organisations and others to raise awareness of economic, social and cultural Rights, plan action and monitor progress in tackling poverty and conduct participatory action

research. The project is officially launching on 10th March [Rights In Action Launch Event Tickets, Thu 10 Mar 2022 at 12:30 | Eventbrite](#)

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) (Hannah)

42. **Primary Care Lived Experience Programme** – this programme, established in September 2021 is about to embark on its second piece of engagement. Our first was a survey asking people what their experience has been accessing General Practice Services. A preliminary report has been produced and a full report will follow next month, this will be published on the ALLIANCE website. The key findings included a general lack of understanding of the role of the wider General Practice team, in particular Receptionists, dissatisfaction with Practice telephone booking systems and a strong desire to return to face to face appointments. Our second area of focus is dental services where we will be asking people what their experience has been accessing services and what their understanding is of the charging structure. We will also ask what “good” dental services would look like for them and their families. This engagement will form two strands – one being a survey which will be open to all, and the other will be working with organisations with a focus on oral health.
43. **Long Covid Network** – the ALLIANCE has had its proposal to set up and host a Long Covid Network approved. This will be supported by CHSS and Asthma UK- British Lung Foundation and will be a vehicle for a collective voice of lived experience to influence and inform long covid services in Scotland. The network will be open to any individual or organisation with and interest in or affected by Long Covid. It is envisaged that Reference Groups will be established form within the membership to enable more specific input as required.
44. **Accessing Social Support for Long Covid** – following significant interest from people with Long Covid, data collection for [this project](#) has ended. We expect to publish a report of findings and key recommendations in April 2022.
45. **Accessing support for disabled children, young people, and their families during COVID-19** – [call for participants for a research project](#) commissioned by the ALLIANCE.
This research project aims to understand how disabled children and young people, and their families, have accessed support during COVID-19. The project will look at how the pandemic has impacted on their access to healthcare (e.g. mental health support, therapies) and access to social care (e.g. day centres, short breaks, child payments). This research is designed for disabled children and young people aged 10 to 18 (including, but not limited to, those living with sensory loss, mobility requirements, multiple complex health conditions, or visual facial differences) from any region in Scotland. It will involve taking part in three remote (online) interviews lasting between 20 to 40 minutes each. Interviews will be adapted to participants’ communication needs, for example, by using text conversations, audio-stories, podcasts, or photo-stories. All interviews will be completely confidential and anonymised. If you have any questions about the project, or are interested in taking part, please email Dr Liliana Arias-Urueña at liliana.arias@ed.ac.uk or liliana.ariasu@gmail.com.

Action: Hannah asked all members to share the call for participants (above)

ESS (Steven)

46. Steven has joined a Scottish Government Working Group for using evaluation and research to inform the recovery from Covid 19 and policy responses. The Robertson Trust is part of this group.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-learning-and-evaluation-oversight-group-minutes-january-2022/>

Crichton Trust_(Jennifer) Received by email:

47. We are just in the final stages of our **Connected Home project** in partnership with the University of Glasgow exploring how rural households use technology in the home and what impact smart technology has on how they live. Although just a pilot project has been with small numbers so far it has been a really interesting project partly as a result of the moment of time it has been running during; the relationship between energy usage and physical/mental wellbeing has been being the universal experience and theme in our conversation regardless of how much or how little 'smart/lively' technology people use in their homes.
48. We are about to start **recruiting PhD students to our KTP** around using sensor technology and the data to support our transition to net-zero for our 24 listed historic buildings. Anyone who has the expense of this (good or bad) please let me know as this is a first for us.
49. We are also looking for organisations and academic researchers that would like to be part of a conversation about **community engagement and co-production in using data and technology**. This is part of a partnership project with us and the University of Glasgow's Mark Wong. We have had been having lots of conversations as part of this project about the gap between the community and academic practice in community engagement in Scotland, as well as the practical/interpersonal skills needed to include disadvantaged voices in coproduction. We are hoping to involve a diversity of experiences in a conversation that will hopefully lead to a good practice guide about how to support co-production in technology and data. If you are interested in being part of this conversation (or know of an existing guide that we have missed) please get in contact.

VSSN_(Jane C.) Received by email.

50. The 2022 *Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference* will take place Thursday 15 – Friday 16 September 2022 at Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK. The theme is **Politics, Partnerships, and Power: Raising Questions for Civil Society**.
51. As we begin to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, civil society organisations (including those in the voluntary, community, social enterprise, and faith sectors) are contemplating the longer term implications of the triple threats they have faced in resources, operations, and demand. Alongside tensions within the sector about how it should work to tackle unequal power relations, both internally and within wider society, civil society seems to find itself in a rather uneasy place in 2022. Politically, the

environment for certain parts of UK civil society has become more complicated. But among the hugely difficult circumstances, the pandemic and other changes in funding landscapes seem to be inspiring new models of partnership and innovation in how to tackle social problems. The unprecedented 'unsettlement' brought by the pandemic meant that some found local government increasingly open to new ways of working, and state-voluntary-business partnerships seem to be providing opportunities to bypass ideological impasses. The growth and continued investment in the community business sector in the UK is another example of how the future may incorporate more hybrid ways of acting.

52. The call for papers is now out with a deadline of May 13. All the information is available here: <https://www.vssn.org.uk/2022-voluntary-sector-and-volunteering-research-conference/>

AOB

53. Jane M. thanked the Forum for their good wishes for her retirement and wished the Forum well in the future.

Next meeting Tuesday 7th June 10.30am – 12.30pm Steven will inform members nearer the time whether this will be in person or on Zoom.