

Chief Officers Group in the Third Sector (COGITS)

Minute of meeting – 6 October 2022

Attendance Online: Sian Bertram (D&G Hard of Hearing), Pamela Deans (D&G Advocacy Service), John Dougan (Relationships Scotland), Mhairi Ross (Apex Scotland), Lisa Todd (D&G Mental Health Association)

Attendance In Person: Roland Chaplain (Glenkens Business Association), Carolyn Kennedy (Better Lives Partnership), Helen Keron (Glenkens Community Arts Trust Ltd), Helen McAnespie (Befriending Project), Kalpana Ratnam-Roarty (User & Carer Involvement),

Present In Person: Norma Austin Hart (TSDG), Natalie Anderson (TSDG), Alan Hall (TSDG),

Present Online: Jane Stanistreet (TSDG) - Online

Apologies: David Barr (Aberlour), Rachel Cowper (Crichton Trust), Mark Smith (River of Life Church), Karen Ward Boyd (Holywood Trust)

Welcome

NAH welcomed everyone to the ninth meeting of COGITS, apologies were noted as recorded.

Introductions were made.

This was the first hybrid meeting of COGITS, with the first in-person element of COGITS for a couple of years. This was also the first time Crichton Central facilities had been used.

The main items to be discussed were:

- Mentoring
- The Voice Project
- Cost of Living Crisis

Note of the meeting of 23 June 2022

The note of the meeting of 23 June 2022 was agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

All were captured within the rolling action log.

Rolling Action Log

The group considered the updates on the rolling action log, noting progress made.

The group noted the item on the RES Delivery Plan would be on the agenda for the meeting in December 2022 given the need to prioritise other agenda items today and that the delivery plan was still being worked on.

Action: NA to add RES Delivery Plan to the December meeting agenda.

Chairing of COGITS - Proposal

Further to the preliminary discussion at the meeting of 23 June 2022, NAH proposed to the group that Helen Keron become Chair of COGITS in November 2022. No other nominations were received. All attending agreed to this proposal.

Action: NAH and HK to meet prior to the next meeting of COGITS.

HK indicated she was looking forward to this role, the group had real value, it was an opportunity to develop a solid support network whilst being a representative voice for the Third Sector. Moving forward, it will be important to grow and develop COGITS.

Mentoring Framework

NAH introduced this item. The mentoring framework was aimed at leaders and aspiring leaders in the sector, it is not an entry level mentoring scheme.

Jane Stanistreet, TSDG Engagement Manager West, is now leading on this project and presented an update to COGITS, the slides from this are available [here](#).

All mentee applications received in the initial application round were from those looking for training rather than a mentoring relationship.

A number of questions/ points were raised including:

Confidentiality (in feedback from the pilot): were people holding back as they didn't believe confidentiality was being met? No, it was in relation to a comment from one person to make sure this is a confidential relationship – it was not a breach or issue as such.

Applications: NAH emphasised TSDG is completely committed, this is an important tool to grow leaders. However, we need more mentees who could be described as aspiring leaders. We are reluctant to come up with criteria, unless we get to the point where we have no-one coming forward. We want to keep it linked to get influence, input and involvement.

Process and Focus: If you were to put a mentee forward, would you need to have a job planned / in mind? This is not about recruitment, it is about people who are aspiring to develop leadership skills, that they get the opportunity to be mentored by someone who already has these skills. It is a personalised relationship for as long as the two agree. TSDG's role is to match people using the application process and the matching questionnaire. This is an opportunity for people to acquire skills and to try to keep them in the sector. A lot of science is involved in the matching process. TSDG has been trying to explain what mentoring is, this is easier through a conversation rather than on paper. We are looking at our communications. The applications received were more in relation to training requirements, not mentoring. We want to mentor potential leaders.

Do we have a profile: not at the moment, but we have produced a one-page flyer – a communication which will improve the message. AH has helped with this. It explains the essence of the scheme and stops short of a profile.

One member did not remember seeing anything about it, may have missed it. JS confirmed that information was communicated in August via the TSDG Bulletin, website and other communications, with applications coming in for September. AH to make sure MR is on all the relevant comms.

Action: AH to ensure MR is signed up for all relevant communications

JD asked if it would be helpful to have an anonymised case study which shared how valuable mentoring is. NAH thought this was a good idea that we could then bring back to COGITS. JS agreed we could do this immediately; we have some fantastic feedback that could be included on the flyer. Every experience is different, we can try to catch something that is meaningful to everyone.

Action: JS to include feedback / case study on the flyer, this will then be shared with COGITS and sent out to enquirers

Action: NA to share the slide deck

COGITS members could consider if they have any nominees or know of anyone (outside their organisation) who might be interested. If so, talk to them and TSDG. People can be nervous as they are uncertain about formulating the direction they want to go. The information needs to indicate that mentoring will help people with this decision making.

Mentoring would also be beneficial for leaders who are moving into the Third Sector as well as people wanting to progress within the sector.

JD thought this to be a very exciting piece of work and asked if other TSIs are doing similar or is D&G leading the way again. NAH does not know what is happening in this area across the sector, she will tell / ask them when it is more developed.

The Voice

NAH presented an update on The Voice project, the slides from this are available [here](#).

NAH indicated that she has started using the toolkit output from the project when asked if there can be a third sector representative on groups and committees, she is receiving varied responses.

COGITS considered how individuals who were being nominated as the representative of the third sector could be supported. A Circle of Collaboration could be developed when there is no thematic forum. Relevant groups could be approached to form a circle of collaboration.

CK thought this to be a very valuable piece of work, we have lived this experience. It is exciting that there is a willingness, but a lot of work and support is needed to make the change.

NAH will present an action plan for the next six months to the TSDG Board.

Action: NAH to present a six-month action plan to the TSDG Board

How Charities Can Respond to the Cost-of-Living Crisis

NAH introduced this item, with three questions for COGITS to consider:

- How does the cost-of-living crisis impact on you and your organisation in relation to budget, staffing etc.?
- Are you planning to add to / change your services to provide help?
- How can TSDG help you during the cost of living crisis?

The discussions included the following key points:

Rising fuel costs:

- The expenses that people, including volunteers, incur are rising and the amount that can be claimed is not increasing in line with this.
- Recruiting volunteers is becoming challenging.
- People who did not previously claim travel expenses are now doing so.
- This adds pressures to budgets
- Resistance from staff to use their own cars (adding miles and wear and tear)
- Some community transport initiatives rely on drivers with their own vehicles
- Raising the mileage allowance would only have tax implications for those who claim very high mileage
- The TS can be more flexible than the statutory sector to go and visit individuals however not if they cannot get there
- Ideas for ways forward:
 - Use of DGC pool cars
 - A cojoined way to access transport
 - Be able to purchase fuel at the DGC fuel depot at Cargenbridge (where it is cheaper)

Accommodation:

- Increased power costs
- The government's [energy bill relief scheme](#) (for 6 months) – if an organisation's contract was made prior to 1 April 2022, it is not going to be entitled to support. Funding might be needed to heat rooms, making sure people are safe and warm when they access services.
- Changes being made to staff and client spaces to heat what is essential only
- Energy bills increasing by more than 100% have necessitated moving premises and staff working at home
- Ideas for ways forward
 - Use council accommodation spaces?
 - Commissioned services - if accommodation was provided then more service could be provided for the same cash.
 - Sheltering commissioned services under their buying power
 - Consider diverting funding for services into rising costs
 - Remind staff about the tax allowance for working at home
 - Emailing local MP about the energy bill relief scheme
 - Put further information about the energy bill relief scheme on the TSDG bulletin and website

Conversations are needed with trustees about the real challenges being faced by organisations

Action: NAH to raise at CPPB

Action: NAH, we can facilitate introductions to get people in a room to discuss

Action: NAH to speak with Douglas Kirkpatrick around these issues to see if there is a way forward, or any merit in convening a short life working group to identify the issues in relation to transport / fuel costs and how these might be addressed.

Budgets for funding applications:

- COGITS discussed the challenges involved in completing funding applications and not knowing what inflationary factor to apply to costs. Some organisations are applying a blanket 10% increase to everything, although it is not known how funders will view this.
- TSDG has just undertaken a cost-of-living survey, this received 45 responses. Close to 20% of respondents had not factored in the risk, 40% of respondents might see a reduction or closure of service.
- Would it be possible to put a statement on the TSDG website indicating what charities would be sensible to include and base it on TSDG's work?

Warm spaces funding:

- The D&G Council team did not know about any plans for this. It was thought that it was being discussed at the September council meeting. There is a frustration at the locality hubs that they know something is coming, but it is not quite there so they cannot start responding with interventions. A sense of urgency would be appropriate at this point. We can communicate this back from the frontline.

TSDG Influence and Representation:

- Can TSDG use its influence as a TSI and tap into networks and lobby?

Service Provision:

- Organisations are looking to continue with the current level of service provision rather than grow services.
- MR reported a huge increase in foodbank usage compared to last year – up 83% in Dumfries – seeing a lot more of the working poor. Up 68% in Stranraer but not really used by working poor.

Shared Prosperity Fund

NAH updated that we still have not seen the investment plan that was submitted by the council. This has been raised with the D&GC CEO and the elected Co-Leaders. NAH has some meetings with local

MPs but the D&GC response has been less than satisfactory. The TSDG Board will be discussing the issue next week.

MR reported that there had been no mention of the SPF at the employability summit, this had been very disappointing.

JD reported that at the D&GC Economy and Resources committee meeting where it was being discussed, the officer in charge could not share the plan as it had been submitted through an online portal. NAH will ask further at CPPB.

HMc indicated that some colleagues are living with redundancy notices due to lack of confirmation of funding to replace EU funds – 90 day consultations, time is running out.

CK – funding has been very last minute, only just getting funding letters for work which has started in August.

KRR – some work had been undertaken in April and D&GC has still not paid for this.

NAH concluded that there is no visible progress. All COGITS members to communicate issues such as these to NAH, it is really helpful to see the real impact this is having on the TS.

Action: all COGITS members to communicate these issues to NAH.

Action: NAH to raise the issue at CPPB

AOCB

Scottish Government Consultation on Land Reform in Scotland

After an introduction to this issue by RC, COGITS was encouraged to complete the consultation on Land Reform in Scotland (accessed [here](#)), the deadline for this has been extended to 30 October 2022.

Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

JS reminded colleagues about this fund, indicating that the deadline for small grant applications was 14/10/22 and that the deadline for expressions of interest for larger grants was 28/10/22.

Next meeting

The next meeting of COGITS has been re-scheduled and will now take place on **14 December 2022 at 2pm, venue to be confirmed.**