

Enabling Empowerment - Community Development in Scotland's Third Sector Interfaces

September 2016

Community Development and Third Sector Interfaces

Executive Summary

1. TSIs and Community Development

Whether supporting local projects and initiatives, enabling participation in planning structures, or supporting co-production, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) in Scotland deliver many aspects of community development across most of their functions. And yet this is often not fully recognised by funders or sufficiently resourced in key partnerships. As statutory sources of support for community development diminish, and third sector community projects are also under increasing pressure, TSIs are increasingly asked to fill the gap by community planning partners and by communities themselves.

This report is intended to stimulate debate within the TSI network as to how to consolidate and strengthen the community development role of TSIs. It will also help TSIs in arguing for the community development resources to work with others in enabling participation. This includes playing active roles in community life, community planning and public service reform as the Community Empowerment Act is implemented and the demand for community development support across Scotland intensifies from third sector and community sector organisations

This study of TSIs in Scotland illuminates the issues that need to be addressed internally and in the wider partnership environment to enable the TSI community development role to be more fully recognised. The report also highlights the need for community development to be explicitly resourced by funders, including the Scottish Government and other local community planning partners, in line with the outcomes of the Empowerment Act and in order for TSIs to become more effective and sustainable in delivering their other roles.

2. The Headline Findings

Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs)

- *TSIs are doing excellent community development work already as “the mortar between the bricks” of their other roles.*
- *TSIs play a critical role in amplifying community voices and helping services engage with communities.*
- *Despite the developing Community Empowerment agenda which is central to reforming services and combating inequality, many TSIs are under-resourced to meet*

this challenge particularly as resources in both the statutory and third sector for community capacity building have reduced.

Partnerships affecting community development

- *Community Planning Partners have good commitment to working with communities in principle but have varied practice and relationships on the ground.*
- *Community Learning and Development Partnerships are new and not all of them are fully prepared for the challenges of the new Community Empowerment Act.*
- *TSIs experience varying levels of involvement in these partnerships - from leadership roles to more tokenistic relationships.*
- *Partnerships for delivering community development are key to maximising resources and delivering ethical, independent support. No sector has the resources to do this on their own.*
- *Expectations of communities and Community Planning Partners are high - but development capacity is in very short supply and co-ordination of support is in its early stages.*

3. Four Pathways to Progress

The study has concluded that future investment should be built around the following four pathways to progress with TSIs taking action on:

Ownership, Co-ordination and Advocating for Community Development

TSIs are at different places in terms of how they conceptualise and co-ordinate their community development roles and in the staff and other resourcing that they have available to deliver them. However, whilst the centrality of community development to the work of TSIs is widely recognised, a more overt approach to setting outcomes and consciously planning for these is required, if community development is to have the impact needed across relevant areas of operation.

In order to ensure that TSIs are ready to make full use of community development approaches to develop their work, TSIs need to:

- *Develop their internal understanding and ownership of community development in all TSIs.*
- *Increase awareness and understanding of community development and third sector values.*
- *Develop cross-cutting TSI community development strategies linked to all TSI common services.*

- *Improve co-ordination of community development inside TSIs and across the TSI network.*
- *Strengthen links to other community development networks across Scotland.*

Workforce development

TSIs consistently told us “we are only as good as our people”. Therefore, workforce development is a key mechanism through which the capacity of TSIs can be strengthened. In order to support this, two aspects are important: firstly, community development needs be seen in the context of broader TSI workforce development issues if delivering change is to be sustainable; secondly, there are very significant community development skills available in some TSIs which could be utilised to improve the position overall.

In order to support the development of a consistent and explicit value base for community development across TSIs in Scotland an articulate community development vision needs to be developed. This vision needs to be matched by solid observable practice built on recognised methods and robust technical knowhow. TSIs should build on the current contribution of staff by:

- *Consolidating and sharing existing knowledge and skills across the wider workforce.*
- *Helping develop a community development perspective for TSI staff as a whole, and increasing understanding of practice frameworks and tools.*
- *Integrating community development into induction, support and wider workforce development.*
- *Addressing gaps in knowledge especially the potential of the Community Empowerment Act.*
- *Ensuring that community development training is delivered flexibly - when and where it is needed.*
- *Learning jointly with other community development and service delivery partners in the interests of local communities.*

Strengthening local community learning and development (CLD) partnerships

TSIs are not the only providers of community development services in local areas, nor should they be. The important roles of statutory providers of community learning and development, health improvement staff and a wider array of other third sector and local community project staff was recognised. However, independent community-owned community development support is increasingly vital. CLD planning processes appear to be the best current mechanisms for addressing the key outcomes and co-ordinating activity.

Community development should be widely owned by community planning partners and not just statutory CLD. Meanwhile, The National Standards for Community Engagement and other

frameworks should be fully implemented and communities should have access to independent community development resources in their own right. TSIs should contribute to local partnerships by:

- *Collaborating on assessment of community strengths and development needs.*
- *Building the TSI community development offer around existing strengths and priorities.*
- *Achieving a division of labour where communities are supported by best-placed agencies.*
- *Building on a bedrock of good community engagement and capacity building.*
- *Improving on existing CLD plans to address needs and opportunities of the current context.*
- *Advocating for well-resourced representative roles of TSI and communities – compliant with the Community Empowerment Act.*

Raising the bar with partners

The environment for planning, delivering and evaluating community development is inextricably linked to the way in which other partners in the community planning process commit to the community empowerment agenda. This is a challenging environment and many TSIs reported positive and willing engagement from partners. However, there is a need to ensure that the community empowerment process itself, and the partnerships that will support this, are approached on an equal footing.

Partnerships are less tokenistic with more parity of esteem, and characterised by respectful and honest collaborations: partners should be honest about the parameters and limitations of what can be achieved. TSIs should consolidate their community development role through:

- *Improving their articulation of the impact of their current community development activity.*
- *Better positioning third sector and community representation/infrastructure as a pre-requisite to compliance with the new statutory framework for participation.*
- *Increasing Scottish Government awareness of their community development role and its resourcing implications.*
- *Highlighting the cost of failing to invest in third sector community development support in key policy areas.*
- *Challenging the culture and behaviour of community planning partners while recognising their need for support and resources.*

Community Development and Third Sector Interfaces

Full Report

1. Introduction & Background

1.1 The Study

In September 2015 Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS) approached Scottish Community Development Centre to produce an initial scoping study designed to illuminate the community development roles being played by Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs). The study was funded by the Scottish Government.

The focus was developed further at the TSI Network National Conference in October 2015 where a workshop concluded that the community development approach needed to be made more explicit in order to strengthen it. It was acknowledged from the outset that there was a wide variety of TSI settings and that community development functions had different expressions within these. The workshop also confirmed that TSIs face a variety of challenges in developing their community development approach across their wider workforce and partners.

The workshop helped VAS and SCDC to frame the study and it was agreed that it should:

- *Identify the nature of the TSIs' community development contribution.*
- *Contribute to a common view about how TSIs might support community development in future.*
- *Help the TSI network produce practical proposals for action.*

1.2 The Background

To some extent, TSIs in Scotland have historically been informed by community development principles and practice in working with people to identify and address issues and form organisations and networks which have built into an extensive community and third sector infrastructure.

This helps communities take action on issues of concern, express their views in partnership processes, and deliver services in localities. As one focus group participant described it, TSIs have “*evolved from communities*” in local areas as well as communities of identity and interest. In this sense community development is part of the DNA of TSIs across Scotland. This role also supports community and other third sector representatives in formal

community planning processes and, increasingly, in the delivery of other key services such as health and social care or children and young people's services.

As place-based approaches to regeneration begin to re-emerge, and a wider array of public sector services seek to engage with communities as part of the public service reform agenda, TSIs are increasingly asked to facilitate links and engagement for a constantly widening array of service providers, researchers and policy makers. Against this backdrop, working with communities continues to emerge as a central facet of policy and public service development in Scotland. This has become prominent with the introduction of the Community Empowerment Act, but is also a feature of the participatory aspects of other key areas of legislation and the wider recognition of what has come to be known as the [Scottish Approach](#) to policy and service development.

Proposals in the current government manifesto for increased participatory budgeting and involvement of third sector stakeholders in shaping equality and new welfare provisions suggest that this trend will not only continue but intensify in the coming years.

1.3 The Challenge

While many TSIs cite community development as a key delivery approach this is not an explicit part of their Common Services framework with the Scottish Government, although there are shared expectations in relation to community engagement and other parts of their role.

Practice also varies across Scotland, with TSIs having access to different levels of resources, knowledge, experience and skills. Public agencies and community planning partnerships also have different levels of commitment to community development approaches and it is recognised that these views, and the resulting relationships, frame the ways in which TSIs are able to apply community development principles.

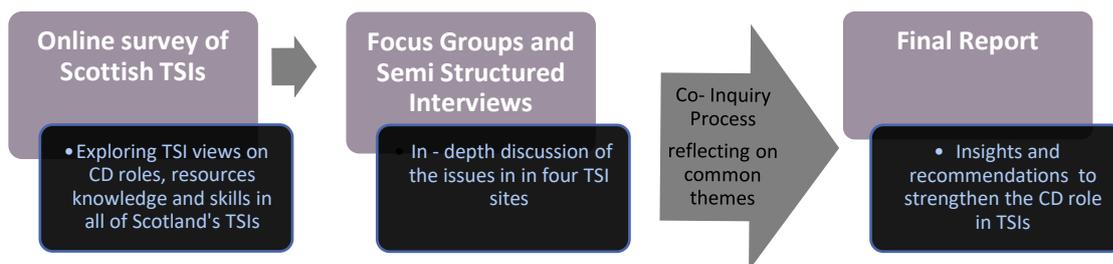
It is for all of these reasons that VAS asked SCDC to help it take this snapshot of the current community development contribution and help articulate the need for setting reasonable priorities in the context of current and future levels of investment. The focus of the work was not to gather data on the kind of issues being worked on locally, as this is available from other sources, but on the community development processes that affect how these are being progressed. Nor is it an evaluation and no attempt is made to judge the quality of the community development interventions being delivered. However, it is reasonable to say that in the view of the SCDC research team, those TSI staff who engaged with the study had a highly principled and very sophisticated understanding of the issues and the challenges facing TSIs in delivering community development outcomes. Since this is also reflected in the findings there seems no doubt that TSIs are making a very significant contribution to the wider

community development landscape and are keen to do more in the future if more appropriately resourced.

2. The Methods

2.1 Overview

The study took a mixed methods approach, including the use of both qualitative and quantitative tools. This included the gathering of detailed information across all TSIs in Scotland via an online survey. SCDC then explored these in more depth via focus groups and individual interviews in four TSIs. The output from this activity was used in a co-inquiry session which enabled participants from the four sites to co-produce a collective analysis and which fed in to draft recommendations for use with the TSI network and the VAS Board. The methods are described in more detail below and detailed information on research tools can be found [here](#).



2.2 Online Survey

The survey was circulated to 66 managerial contacts identified by VAS in TSI member organisations. It targeted staff who were either delivering community development work, or in strategic positions where they were managing it, irrespective of which part of the TSI structure they were placed in. This included those staff who were supporting third sector organisations, as well as those who were developing volunteering or social enterprise. Its aims were to address the following key questions:

- *What level of importance do TSIs place on community development?*
- *How does this translate into the time and human resources committed to it?*
- *What do TSIs view as the most important aspects of community development?*
- *How well equipped do TSIs feel to deliver community development?*
- *How does the local partnership environment affect community development outcomes?*
- *What support do TSIs need to strengthen their community development?*

124 responses were received with 70 of those completing all questions. The results informed the in-depth qualitative phase and the agenda for the co-inquiry process. The data also suggested further areas which can be usefully explored in future and the full dataset will be retained by SCDC should this be felt useful. The questionnaire can be accessed via the following [link](#).

2.3 In-depth Research in Local TSI Sites

In addition to the survey, SCDC facilitated a more in-depth dialogue in four TSI sites including *Moray, Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde*. The TSIs were asked to bid in to this phase of the research process and the four who were selected provided an opportunity to look at the issues in TSIs across a variety of settings and locations including - a major city, a diverse rural location and small and medium sized towns.

- ***The Focus Groups***

Focus groups were held in each of the TSI sites which explored the local context and the practice and relationship issues in each area. Key TSI staff participated in the sessions including those involved in: facilitating engagement; building community capacity; supporting representatives on key structures; stimulating and supporting social enterprise and encouraging volunteering. The overall aim of the sessions was to explore perceptions of the community development role, how it is being delivered locally and the factors which enhance or inhibit delivery. Each focus group lasted for 1-2 hours using a common topic guide which can be accessed via the following [link](#).

- ***Semi-structured Interviews***

A number of additional interviews were held at each site – (a total of fifteen across all sites). These explored the extent to which the community development activity of TSIs is having a wider impact, and the factors that enhance or inhibit the community development role from a variety of perspectives. Interviewees were identified by TSIs in each area to illustrate the opportunities and challenges of the operating environment. They were either organisational users of TSI services or local community development delivery partners. In three of the four sites the participating TSIs opted for one of their senior officers to use one of the interview slots. The interview schedule can be found [here](#).

2.4 Co-Inquiry

The in-depth data from the local sites and the findings of the survey informed a joint co-inquiry session with representatives from the four TSIs. This explored common themes and

issues grouped around four key “paths to progress” arising from the data. These were then used to generate appreciative questions which formed the basis of a future visioning and planning exercise. This approach generated a wide range of issues and proposals which form the basis of the recommendations in this report. The co-inquiry programme can be found [here](#).

2.5 Final Report and Future Dialogue

It was recognised from the outset that this study could only take the thinking so far in relation to how TSIs should focus their community development aims and focus their resources. The study will help enable further dialogue within the TSI network, with the Scottish Government, and with other partners about how realistic community development priorities can be determined and resourced.

3. Findings

The following findings draw information from both the online survey and the qualitative process in the four in-depth sites. The contents of this section have illustrated the key issues emerging from the research and used these to frame the conclusions and recommendations in Section 4. In order to anonymise the views, as agreed with participants, all quotes are unattributed and emanate from focus groups, interviews or qualitative questions in the survey.

3.1 Community Development Priorities

The qualitative discussions with both TSI staff and partners confirmed that community development was an important part of the methodology of TSIs. Also significant was the fact that all of the partner organisations interviewed confirmed that community development was vital to the TSI mission and the community planning process as a whole. Other qualitative responses in the survey highlighted work to support co-design and production of services alongside communities and service users. Strengthening the opportunities and capacities of communities to act in various planning contexts was also confirmed as important.

The relative priorities for current activity were explored in the survey where TSIs were asked to look at SCDC’s definition of community development and relate this to their work in supporting communities as a means of establishing where TSIs priorities for community development lay. This defines community development as an approach and activity that helps people recognise and develop their potential and organise themselves to respond to needs which they share; supports the building of strong communities that control and use

assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life; and enables communities and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government. The full SCDC definition can be read [here](#).

Although most categories from the definition enjoyed very considerable support, apparent priorities did emerge. Respondents identified the following elements as being most important (with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing), and that their priorities were to:

- *Support community/third sector representatives on decision making structures*
- *Enable community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of services or decision making*
- *Help communities develop the knowledge and skills they need to plan and deliver services*
- *Help communities develop their wider networks and alliances*
- *Help people develop and strengthen the governance and effectiveness of their own community or third sector organisations*

TSIs identified the following elements as second most important (with 80% – 89% agreeing or strongly agreeing), and that their priorities were to:

- *Help communities identify issues and priorities - and respond collectively to them*
- *Support communities to influence social, economic and environmental policy*
- *Support empowerment of local geographical communities*
- *Help strengthen the capacity of institutions (public, private or third sector) to work with citizens to achieve positive change*
- *Help communities develop knowledge and skills to be more influential*
- *Help communities mobilise their own strengths and assets to tackle these issues*
- *Support communities to develop or bid for new resources*
- *Support empowerment of communities of interest or identity*

TSIs identified the following as of relatively lesser importance (with 70-79% agreeing or strongly agreeing), and that their priorities were to:

- *Support communities to take control of existing services/resources (asset transfer)*
- *Specifically support the voice of disadvantaged communities*

The very high levels of identification with the key elements of the definition confirm that those surveyed saw community development roles as central to the mission of their TSI. Support for campaigning and advocacy work, whilst still significant for many, was relatively less important with 54% agreeing or strongly agreeing that this was a key priority:

- *Support communities to campaign on wider social justice issues e.g. poverty or equality*

This significant reduction in identification with this priority may reflect the fact that some staff and service users felt that the TSIs priorities had too much of a focus on service delivery and community planning concerns and were insufficiently focused on supporting campaigning and activism. Some felt that the pressure to become more service and project focused had affected the core purpose of TSIs which was to support communities in influencing and shaping services rather than developing alternatives which simply save public agencies money. Given the importance of such work in relation to responding to key issues of concern to TSIs (such as welfare reform), there is a need for more discussion of whether and how TSIs can support legitimate campaigning as part of a policy influencing role.

3.2 Community Development Roles and Activity

The engagement in the in-depth sites suggested that community development was deeply embedded in the way that a wide range of tasks were carried out by staff with participants describing it as their “core business” or being like the “operating system” which enabled the other “applications” of the TSI programme to be successfully delivered;

“it is the DNA of our work in the TSI , it is key to all of our tasks even when folk doing it don’t always think of it in this way”

Even after adjusting for a degree of self-selection of staff with a keen interest in community development in the participation in the focus groups and interviews this view was highly prevalent. It was also very evident in the online survey where respondents reported that time spent on community development was very significant.

In each TSI - Over 90% of those responding estimated that their TSI spent more than half of its time working on community development issues with 47.4% of these estimating total time spent on community development at over 80% of the time spent on all tasks.

Individual respondents – Nearly two thirds of staff told us that they spent more than 70% of their time engaged in community development activity with those who identified themselves as being in senior positions (e.g. Chief Officers, CEOs etc.) suggesting that they, in general, spend slightly less time in community development activity. More than 90% of respondents told us that community development approaches were either a major part of, or significantly informed their role. These findings demonstrate the extent to which community development is at the heart of the TSI role as it is conceptualised by staff.

In terms of how respondents described their main roles, community capacity building and support on community planning structures were of most importance, with support for the third sector in key planning structures coming a close second. Qualitative responses

emphasised the breadth of job roles that were considered to contain community development aspects. These included roles associated with:

- *Support to develop volunteering and volunteers who support community organisations and third sector projects.*
- *Involvement in community planning thematic groups and other strategic activity with partners to enable representation or directly represent the sector.*
- *Engagement with communities around service design and delivery.*
- *Support to develop social enterprises for community benefit.*
- *Support to build community capacity in order to influence local planning.*
- *Training and organisational support for third sector organisations in planning, governance, and other technical aspects of organisation, e.g. employment practice.*

The focus groups and interviews suggested that some direct work with communities to support local activity was also being delivered, particularly in more rural areas, where other services were absent, or in areas where CLD or other providers had reduced their services leaving gaps in support.

It was also acknowledged that vital local community development work, which combined community-led agenda setting with capacity building and development of self-organisation, has been reducing for many years.

“Trusted local community development support is key to nourishing the roots of participation and creating change. We can’t usually do that – and certainly not for long, but someone needs to.”

It was clear throughout the research that there was huge support for finding a way for this role to be filled. This was seen to be essential for the success of the Community Empowerment Act and the reform of community planning and public services more generally.

Opinion about whether TSIs should seek to fill this role was mixed and hinged on several key debates. The first being whether public sector community development was suitably independent and of sufficient quality to do it. Of those who thought they were not there was little doubt that TSIs could help fill this role,

“Third Sector Interfaces have a key and growing role in delivering community development and there is a great opportunity that exists for this, which will ultimately greatly benefit local communities.”

The second being whether it was an appropriate role for TSIs themselves or should they be supporting independent community organisations to do so. The third focused on whether TSIs were sufficiently resourced to take on this task.

There was no clear consensus about the possibility of TSIs taking over the public sector CLD role, although at least one TSI has actively considered it. Debate centred on how TSIs could improve outcomes for communities by raising standards across community development services as a whole and this is explored later in the report in the context of local CLD planning. There was an emerging consensus that communities should be supported to design and seek resources for their own community development support, integrated with but independent from, other community development resources and community planning structures more generally. Further discussion about how TSIs could help communities to achieve this is required.

3.3 Community Development Values and Principles

Respondents in the focus groups, interviews and the survey told us that community development values and principles were deeply embedded in their TSIs. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey indicated that community development values and principles were clearly understood. However, nearly half of respondents also said that their TSIs would benefit from exploring how these values influence practice suggesting that it can be difficult to maintain these in the current operating environment. This may be consistent with the earlier observations about the relative importance of tackling social justice issues through campaigning as this is clearly central to both community development and wider third sector values. Focus group participants reflected on this tension recognising that even in the most progressive of partnership relationships it was difficult to make space for robust disagreement and the positioning of radically alternative views from communities.

“Genuine participation, supported by genuine community development needs to be able to put forward real alternatives and have them listened to seriously. We should remember that it is communities and smaller third sector organisations who are least powerful in partnership processes and our work should address this if we are to be true to our values.”

A third of respondents in the survey also said that their TSI relied on the values of staff in key community development roles, suggesting that greater sharing of principles and values across staff groups could be helpful. Other qualitative statements pointed to the value of staff with training and/or experience in community learning and development, and a number emphasised how community development principles were explored through recruitment:

“We adopt the principles and values of community development work, however we don't deliberately explain or use the language of community development in our activities. While we do not insist on formal community development qualifications we do recruit our staff on the basis that they naturally lean towards the principles of community development.”

However, others thought that they should embed values in a more systematic way,

“We recruit people that have people skills and genuinely believe everyone has something to offer. Induction training on community development values would help staff practice with understanding and knowledge of these values.”

3.4 Community Development Competencies, Skills and Knowledge

Across all of the discussions that informed the findings, the challenge of how to support staff to deliver high quality community development services was very evident. In addition to in-house quality assurance, the community development impact of TSIs was seen as being linked to that of other staff in statutory or third sector contexts. It was also linked to the way in which partnership environments enhanced or inhibited community development, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge which underpin it.

The study explored the internal TSI context for this in some depth and the survey generated the following conclusions.

Competencies - The majority of respondents (74%) indicated that their TSI makes use of existing CLD competencies, although the survey did not explore how they do this. In most cases this is probably in terms of recruitment materials and relatively informally thereafter as this quote suggests;

“While most of our staff adopt community development approaches and have the key competencies required, we do not explicitly make use of the competencies framework. We would benefit from, and have intended for some time to set up, training and development opportunities to develop our community development skills and competencies, both collectively and as individuals, and to consciously embed consistent community development practice and approaches in our work.”

Despite some knowledge of the CLD competencies 51% felt that they would benefit from knowing more about them as the quote above also suggests.

Skills and knowledge - We explored how TSIs developed their staff in this area. Respondents overwhelmingly (94%) told us that they had a good understanding of core community development skills. Most seemed satisfied with the level of staff knowledge - only 4% identified a deficit in this area.

Whilst the existing levels of skills and knowledge were felt to be good, respondents identified a number of issues for training and development:

- 19% indicated that they relied on partner agencies to bring community development skills to TSI work
- reliance on the competence of individual staff was high – 64%, perhaps raising concerns around the sustainability of organisational community development core skills should key individuals move on or retire
- 11% indicated that they did not consciously develop core community development skills
- 69% responded that they would benefit from training in community development approaches

Qualitative comments developed this further:

“We could do with more consciously developing the community development skills of staff. We have lots of these skills built up from experience across disciplines which is fantastic and adds depth and range to our ability to deliver across many areas of work. However, as an organisation it would be great to have a framework that we consciously fed into and drew training and nourishment from, where we could continuously reflect, enhance and improve our delivery of community development.”

3.5 Delivery of Wider Community Support

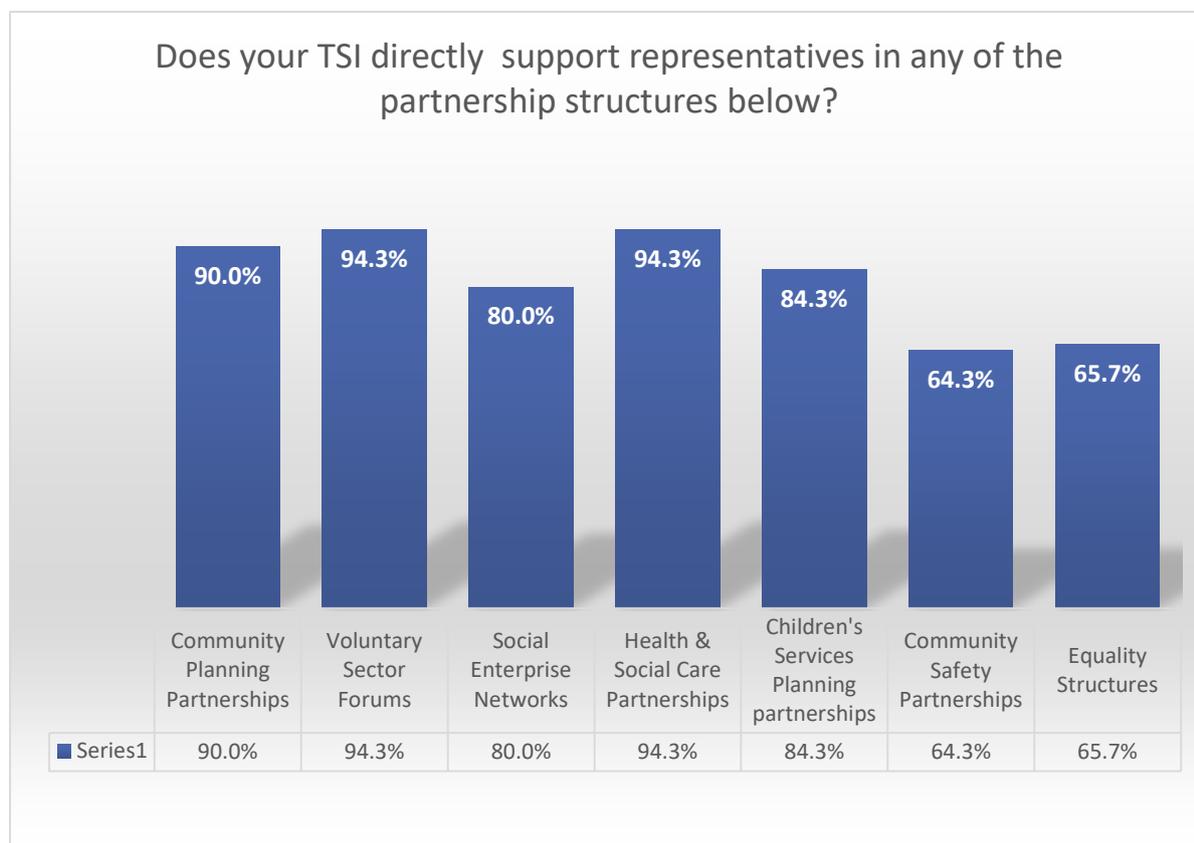
Consistent with previous responses, respondents indicated a broad range of support was delivered by their TSI – with information and organisational support being cross-cutting. Qualitative comments in the survey emphasised the breadth of support offered, including:

- *Creation of thematic forums and community networks.*
- *Linking with partners in the third, public and private sector.*
- *Training on a wide range of issues.*
- *Support to develop ‘front line’ community action.*
- *Administrative and payroll support.*

3.6 Supporting Involvement in Key Structures

A key role for TSIs lies in supporting communities and third sector representatives in local partnership structures as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Support for representatives



TSIs are striving to enable involvement, and or directly represent the sector, in a wide range of partnerships and structures. The most common of these structures were community planning partnerships, voluntary sector forums and health and social care partnerships. This role was less evident in community safety and equalities structures. Other participation opportunities and forums identified included:

- *Community justice*
- *Mental health*
- *Alcohol and drugs*
- *Joint Health Improvement Partnerships*
- *Volunteer Coordinators Network*
- *Adult Protection*

In general, it appears that TSIs feel reasonably well integrated into planning structures themselves. However, comments were noted that the opportunities to participate can

outstrip the development capacity needed to support wider third sector and community representation on these structures in a meaningful way:

“Due to limited resources and staffing the TSI has not been afforded the position to sit at and be a key partner in all of the above.”

It should be noted that being integrated did not guarantee that these partnerships were themselves effective, and the appetite may not always be present to engage as reflected in the following comment,

“Most third sector (groups) in our area are small local groups or projects of national groups - so it has been our experience to date that they do not want to invest the time required to work in public sector structures - there are so many (e.g. local carers project withdrew from all the HSCP meeting structures due to being overwhelmed by the number of meetings). Where there is interest we of course support this ... we run a third sector leadership network and lots of events to involve communities and third sector.”

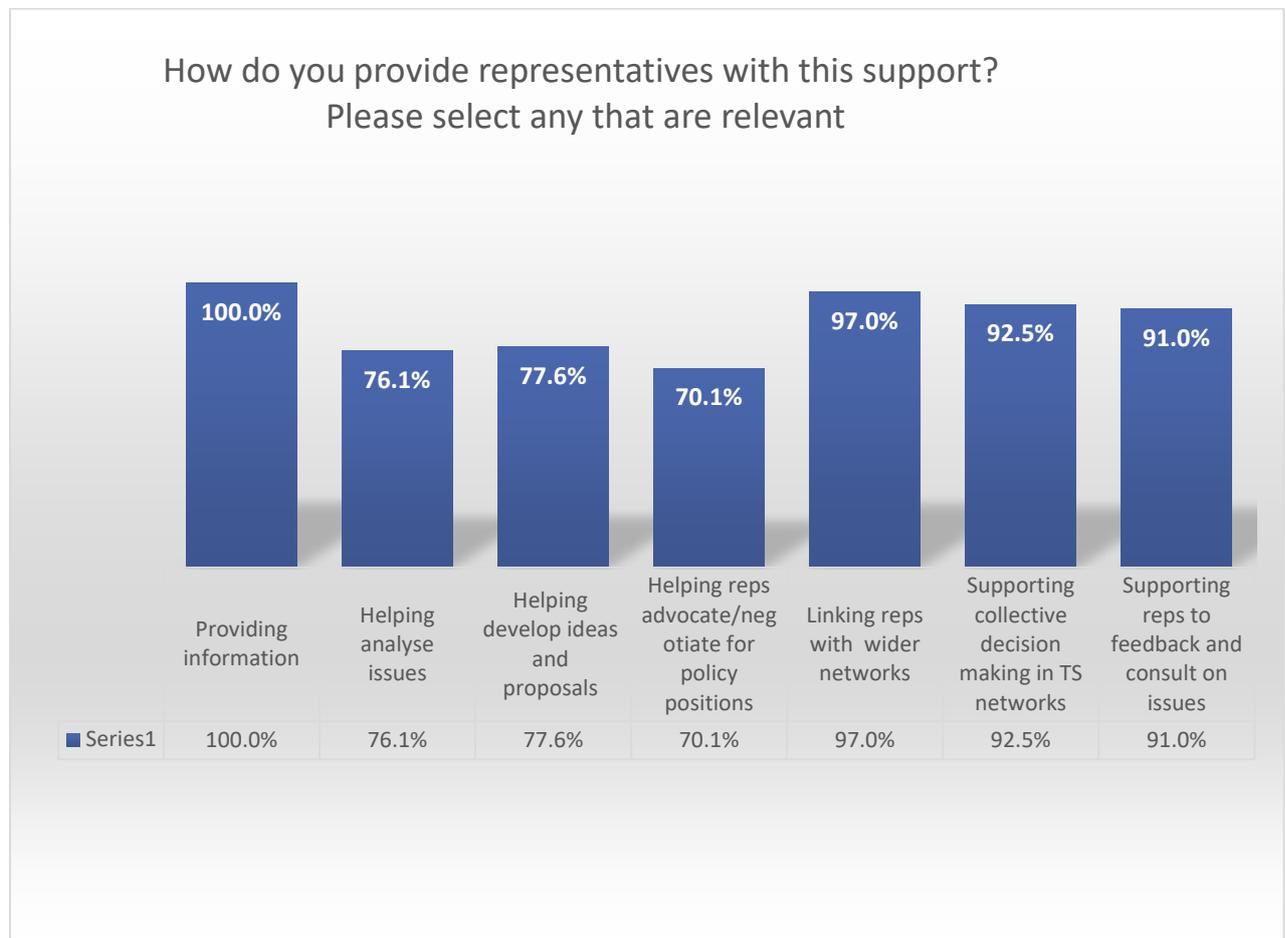
Nature of support - Providing information, linking representatives with wider networks, and supporting collective decision making were key methods of support. Comments indicated key challenges and barriers in relation to time and support for appropriate representation. Finding additional resources for this kind of support is also difficult for TSIs;

“Time - small organisations are asked to attend so many meetings, but at the same time, have reduced funding and smaller staff size, so the time involved in attending networks etc. put a great deal of pressure on their organisations capacity.

“This can become immensely time consuming, but also an area that is difficult to find additional funding for, beyond the TSI core grant. This is a valuable and key role for intermediary bodies such as ourselves, but the majority of grant funders do not see this as direct service provision so do not like to invest in it.”

The main roles being played in supporting representatives are described below:

Table 2. How are representatives supported?



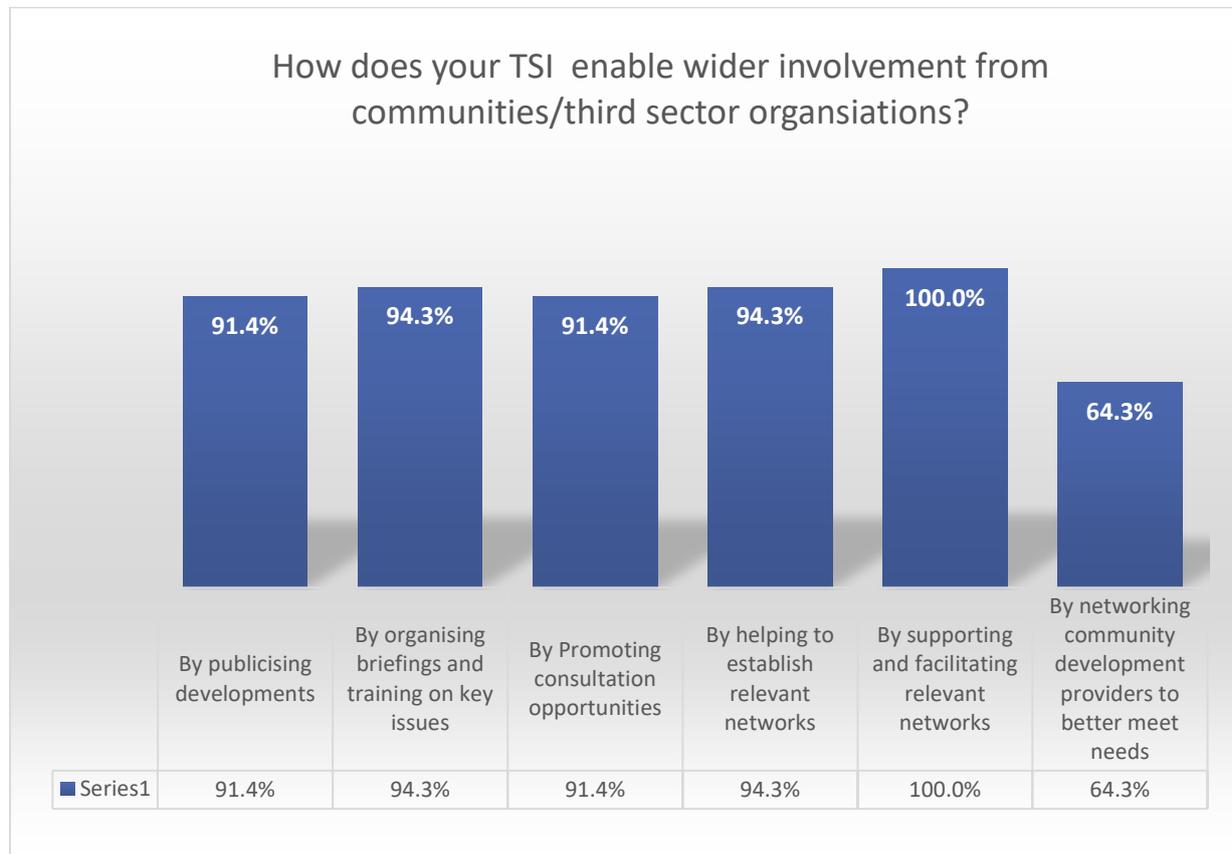
Direct representation in partnerships - Almost all of the responding TSIs were directly represented in their Community Planning Partnerships and Health and Social Care Partnerships although fewer were involved in equalities structures. Identified challenges and barriers included:

- *The increasing scope of Community Planning Partnerships*
- *Lack of funding and time constraints*
- *Difficulty in representing breadth of views and authenticity of representation*
- *Only certain third sector voices heard due to constraints noted above*
- *Lack of feedback and consistent engagement with statutory partners*
- *Lack of mutual understanding between third and public sectors*

Tensions between the third sector enabling role and the direct representations of TSIs in the networks were explored further below.

Enabling wider Third Sector involvement - The development and support of networks were key ways in which TSIs enable wider involvement with communities and other third sector organisations. The TSIs contribution to this is described below.

Table 3. How does your TSI enable involvement?



However enabling involvement sometimes requires challenging third sector partners to ensure that they are representative and can demonstrate their own mandate. In order to do this the TSI requires very significant credibility in community development terms.

“We have to remember that part of the new role for us as a TSI is not thinking that the third sector is perfect ...you can’t just say that you have engaged with the tenants and residents group in that community and therefore you have engaged. We have to think about how we challenge the tenants and residents association to be good at engaging its own community.

“If our sector doesn’t feel that we are a part of their community and that they are a part of theirs - we have no value.”

One participant interviewee described how some very large disability organisations claim they are the voice of the disability impairment, and saw clear parallels when TSIs over-claim their representative roles. This reflected a concern that TSIs needed to be careful not to “stifle” the voices of smaller organisations - especially those who express robust critical views. Several TSIs also addressed these issues by explicitly expressing the need for TSI representation on key structures to focus on representing the genuine collective agenda. This was sometimes very difficult to achieve since it often needed to ensure accountability to a broader, and very diverse, constituency. It was seen as important that TSIs should always be pushing for better representative structures and representativeness of third and community sector organisations as fundamental concepts. This focus was seen to require good community development “instincts” based on solid values, knowledge and skills.

3.7 Working with Community Planning Partnerships and Responding to Community Needs

By comparison with previous responses, there was a greater degree of ambivalence with regard to the effectiveness of how Community Planning Partners engaged with communities.

- *Whilst 63% indicated that Community Planning Partners were keen to respond to community needs and concerns, nearly a third (28%) suggested that their local Community Planning Partners were ineffective at engaging with community organisations.*
- *Whilst only 38% were positive about the readiness of public sector partners for partnership working, 67% felt there was a strong commitment to engage communities in the process of public service reform.*
- *Worryingly, more than a third (37%) felt that Community Planning Partners used engagement as a way of endorsing decisions already made, with the same percentage neither agreeing nor disagreeing.*
- *There were mixed feelings over the extent to which community development was well resourced and activity invested in at a local level. 44% reported that local authority and Community Planning Partners invested effectively in community development, but only 15% felt there was enough community development support available locally.*
- *There was a strong belief that TSIs were seen as sources of effective community support by both public sector partners and communities. This is concerning given the overall views about the lack of resources suggests a scenario where demand is far greater than supply.*
- *More than half (57%) were concerned that there were insufficient resources available to fully realise the implications of the Community Empowerment Act. Only 5% were confident that resources were adequate.*

These findings are key to how TSI staff experience the impact of the partnership environment on their ability to support effective community participation in the context of the new drive

for community empowerment. Qualitative comments echoed the range of opinions expressed in the closed questions. Respondents described how:

"The CPP and local authority like to think they have strong mechanisms for engaging with communities and community organisations, but the extent to which this engagement genuinely influences policy directions or resource allocations is questionable. Some Council and NHS teams are very engaged and supportive, others less so."

Some respondents commented on the usefulness of the structures themselves relative to the expectations of participation they now face:

"Very often the challenges and barriers to influence are not about the approaches or work done rather the structures and systems we are trying to influence. Public Sector structures were not set up or intended to have large scale direct input from communities and yet we are in an era where this is not only wanted but is necessary!"

There were also positive examples of working in some areas:

"There has been a lot of change but the CPP, Council and HSCI hold genuine engagement with communities as a central part of culture change, and there are strong and equal partnerships with the third sector."

The Community Empowerment Act itself raised major issues for some TSIs in terms of capacity and commitment:

"Community Empowerment legislation and integration of health and social care legislation need to be more directly linked, as principles underpinning these at this moment in time are in danger of being delivered at a weaker or tokenistic level. We work hard to ensure this is not the case, but in terms of capacity and resource that is extremely challenging. We do have trust from our partners and from communities, but this can be thwarted as not everybody is on board or truly understands or believes in community empowerment."

However, in some areas, work was already underway to support use of the Act:

"We are already promoting knowledge and learning about the Community Empowerment Act, and seeking to broker relationships between community groups and key public sector bodies with the aim of enabling future participation requests. We have the relationships with the Council to be able to do this, but this will be more of a challenge with respect to other public sector bodies where we don't necessarily have such strong collaborative relationships."

In summary, the mixed responses suggest that the relationship between Community Planning Partners, TSIs and communities is geographically uneven and often variable within different parts of the service landscape in the same CPP. Some areas report positive and proactive patterns of engagement, whilst other remain less well developed. However, TSIs were confident in their role in supporting and directly delivering representation for the community and third sector, although they had reservations about the resourcing of community development work to achieve this sustainably.

Many of the respondents from services themselves echoed these challenges from the perspective of service provider organisations and acknowledged that to deliver the required changes in culture their organisations would need to invest in learning support for staff in how to adopt a community development perspective to their service delivery. This was seen as important in achieving partnership, realising aims for co-production and avoiding unhelpful conflict. Although TSIs were seen as contributors to this learning many recognised that it should not be down to TSIs to change the culture in public agencies and were realistic about the need for major changes in that culture.

Several public service providers who are committed to community development approaches acknowledged this paradox. Many finding it very difficult to effectively interface with the third sector and communities due to their diversity while recognising the need for different approaches to engaging with them. Many looked to TSIs to bridge this gap for them and to deliver a unified position on key issues which they could make sense of and work with. It was acknowledged that making these links and building the trust and relationships in public services and community based third sector organisations required development capacity on both sides and they feeling was that this was often absent.

“Most service provides often lack the time and patience to learn to work with communities, alongside other service targets. Good community development support or staff who can work in a community development way are always a feature of the most successful service partnerships – sadly most of the time it just isn’t there and this is a real challenge for empowerment based approaches to service reform.”

3.8 Support Available for Community Development and Community Capacity Building

There was clear recognition that there is a chronic shortage of support for trusted and holistic community development support locally and community capacity building in particular. This is a key issue for TSIs internally and externally in term of gaps at neighbourhood level from CLD services and other sources. This was seen as fundamentally undermining participation, community empowerment and delivering third sector involvement in public service reform. In general the study found that TSIs viewed the need to overhaul and boost services as a

partnership issue. This section explores how TSIs partnerships for community development currently work in practice.

Dealing with requests – Most respondents reported that they dealt with support requests in-house, either personally or by referring to a colleague. Or, they would seek to work in partnership with another agency. What was striking was that signposting and more formal referrals were much less frequent.

Table 4. Dealing with requests



Many respondents commented that the nature of the enquiry would determine the approach taken. One respondent described the blurring of roles between the local authority CLD function and the TSI:

“This would entirely depend on the nature of the request, however the boundaries of what CLD do and the TSI are not clear. Staff within the TSI would claim they carry out more community development activity than the CLD department of the Council. There is no evidence to suggest this but requests for support appear to be something which in the past CLD would have done themselves.”

This re-emphasises a number of the issues raised above with regards to the relationship between TSIs and CLD services as well as the capacity issues in other services and how they can be accessed by local people.

Partners in delivering community development activity - When asked about who were their key partners in delivering community development support locally, internal personnel were the most frequently used resource (92%) suggesting that there is both more scope for partnership working as well as some significant barriers to it. Despite comments above regarding capacity and work with local authority CLD, statutory CLD providers remain an important partner agency (72%), as do third sector partners and Community Planning Partnerships. Other statutory providers such as Health Improvement Teams were identified as important in half of responses. National community development agencies were the main partners in slightly less than a third of responses (29.2%).

TSI links to CLD plans – Legislation and Statutory Guidance for Community Learning and Development services, including the third sector, now requires more co-ordination and wider planning of this work based on systematically assessed local need. The implementation of the Community Empowerment Act will further emphasise the need to do this effectively. Community Planning Partners are now required to develop formal Community Learning and Development Plans and the first versions of these are now in place. 60% of those responding reported that their TSI was formally part of the CLD planning process which, whilst a good start, leaves significant room for improvement. 49% were consulted on its content and 35% were actively involved in assessing community needs as part of the plan. However, 12% felt distant from the process, with 17% being unaware of the process entirely. Since this means that more than a quarter of respondents are not well integrated into the development of CLD plans it is clear that more needs to be done to develop wider ownership of them. Comments suggested that greater involvement and co-production is evolving – but that CLD cuts are a negative influence on the process. However it should be noted that in some areas of Scotland including one of the test sites, CLD plans are being led entirely by TSIs whilst in others TSI and CLD services are increasingly working together in areas of common concern such as community capacity building. A planned approach to the co-ordination of support forms a central part of the recommendations of this report both internally within TSIs and amongst the broader partners for community development locally including community development trusts, statutory agencies and projects working at local level.

3.9 Overall Effectiveness in Delivering Community Development

When asked about the overall effectiveness of their TSI's role there was very strong support for statements which indicated that community development activity is delivered effectively, meets local needs and influences key strategic decisions:

- *97% felt their TSI was able to deliver meaningful community development activity*
- *86% used community development approaches to deliver empowerment for communities of interest*

- *97% reported that their community development work was delivering effective community and third sector influence and 89% told us that community development work was helping influence their Community Planning Partnership*

Despite comments to the contrary described earlier, 85% reported that they had enough resources to deliver good community development services. However, some of the qualitative comments explored this apparently contradictory finding, highlighting that although *current* delivery was well-enough resourced, more could be done:

“I think we have enough resource for what we're currently doing, but we could do a lot more. And as we have a lot of staff who are part time, I think that people often feel stretched.”

The demand for community development related work was seen as increasing in light of cuts to local authority CLD and from other areas – resources were not keeping up with this demand:

“This becomes more essential as the local authority reduces the level of general capacity building CLD work it provides, in favour of more formal Adult Learning and Employability provision. There are significant questions about who will be the key local provider of grounded, local community work in the future. We might see a larger future role for the TSI in delivering this, but this would be difficult to increase on current resourcing and staffing levels.”

Respondents also commented on local authorities assuming that TSIs can take up the slack following reductions in other community development services,

“There are issues around what the CLD department of the Council does since they refer many organisations to us for support. Capacity to deliver support is a real issue since our core funding does not allow us to employ enough staff with the required skill level to do this.”

The conflicting nature of these comments suggests there was a mismatch between TSIs, local authorities, and communities in terms of expectations, available financial resources and capacity. This has implications for the success of partnership approaches to assessing and responding to need which require further exploration.

Given the scale and nature of the challenges described It is important that the natural tendency to celebrate the quality of what is being delivered by TSIs in difficult circumstances does not obscure the obstacles involved in responding to a new paradigm of community participation and the community development supports that will be needed to underpin it. It is therefore intended that the tensions and inefficiencies highlighted in this report inform closer collaboration and increased shared resourcing where possible.

3.10 Additional Support for Delivery of Community Development

When asked to consider possible support to strengthen the community development role respondents raised a broad range of ideas. The majority (80%) felt that training and awareness around the Community Empowerment Act would be beneficial. Around a third felt that they needed support: to produce TSI community development strategies; prepare for strategic engagement interventions; make increased use of the statutory duty to develop community development plans and to help make the case for community development. Slightly fewer of those responding expressed support needs in terms of partnership development and the mobilisation of alliances for local change.

However, resourcing was highlighted by many as a fundamental issue:

“What we would need most to strengthen delivery of community development is additional resource to enhance staffing time and capacity. This is an area we would like to further invest in. We have piloted some excellent work in one neighbourhood this year with short-term NHS funding and an outstanding community development practitioner in post. [...] We are seeking continuation funding, but at this point do not know whether we will be able to sustain the post past June.”

Very fittingly, one comment focused on the notion of support for TSIs as a two way process between those providing the support and those tasked with direct delivery:

“We have many experts telling us many things all the time. We are the ones directly working on the ground, learning the lessons, and being part of many positive and constructive community development activities that lead to change. We would benefit from more structured support, but this should be delivered in a way that is helpful, and that respects our existing knowledge and practice - we have much to give back to inform future knowledge and skills development within the practice of community development.”

This important insight reminds us that huge amounts of positive practice are ongoing already and that TSIs are amongst the biggest providers of community development support in the country at present. Given this, the imperative is not whether to support the community development role of TSIs but how to do so.

Strengthening the workforce – Participants in the survey identified a number of actions in terms of developing knowledge and skills. Learning events on community development practice frameworks generated the most positive response with three quarters of survey respondents expressing an interest in development opportunities in this area. 69% felt support around tools and techniques would be helpful with 59% expressing interest in direct

coaching and mentoring to develop their skills. Qualitative comments reflected an interest in personal development and community development related training more generally. The need for ongoing support to extend community development knowledge and skills beyond specific individuals was noted;

“We have actively encouraged staff to undertake learning in community development, however as staff change it would be useful to be offered continuous learning for personal development and reflective practice.”

The relationship between community development as a specific area of expertise, and the extent to which community development approaches can be more generally embedded was also highlighted as important,

“It would be great to focus on enhancing our skills and strengths with regards to community development. Community development should not become its own silo, where only accredited professionals are allowed to carry out community development activity - that would really defeat the purpose. But we should find a way of consistently recognising and continuing to develop our skills. We should also be enabled to engage in further projects where the work we do feeds into what community development is.”

4.0 Recommended Actions to Strengthen TSI Community Development

The overall purpose of the research is to deliver recommendations for improvement in the profile, recognition, understanding and delivery of community development with TSIs. The proposals below were directly derived from the findings in the survey and the qualitative work. The main mechanism for refining these was the co-inquiry process which built on the research findings in the context of four key paths to progress described below. These pathways are inevitably systemically linked and there is a degree of overlap between them. Positive overarching outcomes for each pathway were identified by co-inquiry participants and potential milestones for achieving these were discussed and noted. The output from these discussions has the potential to form the basis of a roadmap for VAS and its partners for the purpose of strengthening TSI community development. All were directly expressed in the co-inquiry event with minimal subsequent refinement by the research team other than to frame them as draft recommendations.

4.1 Ownership, Co-ordination and Advocating for Community Development

Throughout the study it has been acknowledged that TSIs are at different places in terms of how they conceptualise and co-ordinate their community development roles and in the staff

and other resourcing that they have available to deliver them. This is even more challenging across partnership TSIs where shared methodologies and planning processes are often more difficult to achieve. What was widely recognised was that the centrality of community development to the work of TSIs meant that a more overt approach to setting outcomes, and consciously planning for these, was required if community development was to have the impact it needed across relevant areas of operation. It was also clear that this would require internal capacity to be strengthened.

Key Outcome: TSIs are ready to make full use of community development approaches to develop their work.

Draft Recommendations:

- TSIs should improve the operational co-ordination of different roles which contribute to community development across all constituent organisations in the TSI. This should build on existing levels of co-operation which were evident in the research and address weaker linkages where these exist - either within single agencies, or between TSI partners.

- TSIs should consider producing cross-cutting community development strategies linked to their common services. These should set clear outcomes and map pathways for achieving them.

- A common statement on community development should be produced by the TSI network, supported by VAS. This should:
 - Describe the role community development plays in delivering TSI outcomes and articulating the challenges which TSIs in Scotland face in implementing this approach in the current funding and partnership context.
 - Outline the current and potential contributions of TSI community development as it supports the “Scottish Approach” to policy and practice. This should include its role in key local structures such as Community Planning Partnerships and other integrated joint planning.
 - Highlight the importance of community development for public service reform and co-production and how it should be reflected in commissioning and procurement for community planning outcomes.
 - Establish the limitations of current resourcing of this within existing TSI grant agreements with a view to making the case for increasing investment in TSI community development work in future.

- TSIs in Scotland should play a greater role in advocating for community development with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other public agencies. In addition to TSIs' own relationships with Government, this should be achieved by strengthening links to other community development networks and organisations such as The Community Development Alliance Scotland, the Scottish Community Development Network and the Scottish Community Development Centre.

4.2 Workforce Development

A recurring message of the research was that TSIs were “only as good as our people” and that therefore workforce development was a key mechanism through which the capacity of the TSIs could be strengthened. There were two important assertions that bookended this discussion. These were that, on the one hand, community development needed to be seen in the context of broader TSI workforce development issues if delivering change was to be sustainable, and on the other, that there were already very significant community development skills available in some TSIs which could be utilised in improving the position overall.

Key outcomes:

- There is a consistent and explicit value base for community development across TSIs in Scotland.
- An articulate community development vision is matched by solid observable practice.
- Community development methodology and technical knowhow are the twin pillars of community development workforce development.

Draft Recommendations

- The internal understanding and ownership of community development in all TSIs should be further developed through training, building on consultation about training needs and workable delivery approaches in order to build maximum support. This should build on increasing awareness of the overlaps between community development practice and community development perspectives/approaches such as empowerment and participation felt to be present in wider third sector values.
- The community development perspective for TSI staff as a whole should be integrated into recruitment, induction, supervision and appraisal. This should make use of acknowledged CLD competencies.
- Training and learning programmes should consolidate and share existing knowledge and skills present in many staff across the wider workforce. How staff with these skills are enabled to share these should be a focus for future discussion.

- Training should increase understanding of contemporary practice frameworks and tools for community development that link most closely to TSI community development goals.
- Specific gaps in knowledge should be identified and addressed. A particular area of focus should be on the content and potential of the Community Empowerment Act - including its specific technical aspects such as asset transfer provisions, community planning participation requirements and the operation and support for participation requests.
- Potential training and learning approaches must be co-produced by TSIs themselves to ensure their relevance and flexibility.
- Where it is feasible, opportunities for joint workforce development should be explored, where this has clear benefits for the third sector and community sector. Two main dimensions to this were identified:
 - Shared learning with other local CLD providers from a range of sectors allowing both mutual learning and planning to take place with colleagues sharing broadly similar values in the context of the local CLD plan.
 - Shared learning with staff from other public agencies where there is a need to build a community development perspective which enables local people and service users to be involved in co-productive relationships with service providers. This would seek to build common values and reduce the potential for conflict based on mutual understanding in a public service reform context.

4.3 Strengthening Local Community Learning and Development Partnerships

There was a clear recognition that TSIs are not the only providers of community development services in local areas, nor should they be. The importance of the roles of statutory providers of community learning and development, health improvement staff and a wider array of other third sector and local community project staff was recognised. However there was also a view that independent community-owned community development support was increasingly vital. There was a general acceptance that local CLD planning processes were the best current mechanisms for addressing the key outcomes and co-ordinating activity.

Key Outcomes:

- Community development is widely owned by Community Planning Partners as a whole not just statutory CLD.

- The National Standards for Community Engagement and other frameworks are fully implemented.
- Communities have access to independent community development resources in their own right.

Draft Recommendations

- TSIs should collaborate with other partners in a thorough assessment of local community strengths, development needs and priorities.
- TSIs should build on solid engagement with local communities utilising the National Standards for Community Engagement as a framework to discuss how independent community development resources can be achieved.
- TSIs and VAS should push for CLD partnerships to develop and implement their plans with the support requirements of the Community Empowerment Act to the fore.
- TSIs and VAS should advocate for development of a supportive and cross-cutting participation environment where mechanisms such as formal participation requests are not essential to get a seat at the table. Whilst immediate presenting priorities should set the agenda, unmet need which undermines the potential intention of the Community Empowerment Act to respond to broader issues should be logged and highlighted for future planning.
- TSIs and VAS should use their experience of participation and third sector development challenges more generally to argue for plans which are compliant with the Community Empowerment Act and other legal frameworks such as health and social care, integrated children and young peoples' services planning, and community justice arrangements.
- TSIs locally should collaborate with community development partners and other agencies where appropriate in developing a division of labour where communities are supported by the agencies who are best placed to do so. Community development providers should support each other to achieve this in the interests of local empowerment.
- TSIs and VAS should seek to ensure that local partnerships for community development aspire to deliver good quality community engagement and capacity building for organisations at many levels as participation develops.

4.4 Raising the Bar with Partners

The environment for planning, delivering and evaluating community development is inextricably linked to the way in which other partners in the community planning process commit to the empowerment agenda. Given the challenges in this environment, it is encouraging that participants in the survey were quite positive about the willingness of many of their partners to engage. However, challenges which surfaced in the qualitative findings have helped frame the following required outcomes.

Key Outcomes:

- Partnerships are less tokenistic with more parity of esteem, and characterised by respectful and honest collaborations.
- All partners are able to be honest about the parameters and limitations of what can be achieved.

Draft Recommendations

- TSIs and VAS should argue for ongoing evaluation of community empowerment outcomes in a number of community planning test sites where community development could be more fully resourced - perhaps through a change fund type approach as well as in core funding.
- TSIs and VAS should seek to improve their articulation of their community development impact.
- TSIs should utilise community development ideas more consistently to better position third sector and community representation/infrastructure within Community Planning Partnerships. This is a prerequisite for compliance with the new statutory framework for participation represented by the Community Empowerment Act and linked legislation such as Part 3 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act.
- TSIs and VAS should highlight the cost of failing to invest in third sector community development support in key policy areas, such as the delivery of the “Scottish Approach” and the realisation of the aims of the Christie Commission for public service reform, wherever possible.
- TSI should continue to challenge the culture and behaviour of Community Planning Partners where required while recognising and supporting partners need for support to make these essential shifts.

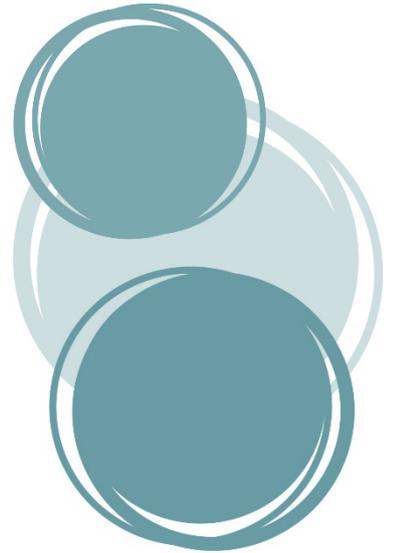
5. Conclusion

This study should be used by VAS to engage TSIs and their partners more fully about how to consolidate and develop their community development work. Some areas for further research suggest themselves building on the scoping study including:

- Further mapping of the distribution and availability of community development resources - particularly in relation to access for disadvantaged communities and those with protected equalities characteristics.
- Exploration of community experience of community development services from TSIs and other providers.
- Further exploration of workforce development and management for community development roles in TSIs.
- Experiences of TSIs in the implementation of CLD planning.
- Involvement of TSIs in the development of readiness to implement the Community Empowerment Act.

The current environment created by the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act and the emphasis on community as a central concept in regeneration, public service reform and democratic renewal, means that the publication of this study is very timely.

Communities have a right to expect support to combat inequality and improve outcomes for all Scotland's citizens. Policy is highly innovative and pushing community planning further than even before in this direction which behoves those services to be more effectively consolidated and strengthened to address the coming demand. TSIs are no exception to this and this study is intended to assist VAS to take this debate forward on behalf of the TSI network in Scotland.



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