**Note of meeting of the Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) – 20 October 2020**

1. **Present:** Raymond Branton, Chair (Family and Community Development), Diane Cameron (WLSEN), James Penman, Minute Taker (VSGWL), Elizabeth Stevenson (Signpost), Helen Davis (West Lothian Youth Action Project), Alan McCloskey (VSGWL), Joanna Van Den Berg (Firefly Arts), Angie Mason (WLSEN), Karen Nailen (Citizens Advice Bureau), Brian Pringle (WLDAS), Stuart Barrie (Homestart), David MacDonald (Whitburn and District CDT), Alison Wright (Carers of West Lothian), Dawn Henderson (Families Outside), Silence Chihuri (FJSS), Beth MacLean (Safe Families), Rosemary McCabe (Children 1st).

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| **ITEM** | **KEY POINTS** | **ACTION BY** |
|  | **Apologies**Raymond welcomed everyone to the meeting.Apologies – Matt Pearce (West Calder and Harburn CDT), Jay Haston (Men/Women Matter), Lisa Drinnan (Community Action Blackburn), Lesley Mount (Signpost), Mark Kennedy (Circle), Stephanie Simpson (Victim Support West Lothian), Alan Davidson (The Bridge), Angela Weir (West Calder Hub), June Dickson (Environmental Health) |  |
|  | **Welcome**Raymond welcomed everyone to the meeting.Elizabeth Stevenson is leaving Signpost and this will be her last TSSG meeting. Elizabeth was thanked for her contribution to the TSSG over the years and everyone wishes her all the best in her future endeavours. **Previous minutes**The action notes were accepted as an accurate account of the previous meeting.**Matters arising****CPP Update**The discussion was mainly focused on the Anti-Poverty working group, Economic Recovery Plan, and the 3rd Sector Summit outcomes. There was some positive feedback from those partners who either attended the summit or has viewed the slides and video. The priorities identified have been supported. Councillor Sullivan proposed a motion thanking the sector for the collective work that has been done over the last few months. Good recognition of the sector’s response to the Covid pandemic.**Children and Families Forum**Minutes from the forum will be available soon. At the forum everyone had a general catch up and voiced their concerns about the impact of Covid on their people, especially organisations where they are still unable to return to normal services. A big thank you to all for their honesty and openness when sharing experiences. Meetings will be held monthly going forward.**Diversity**There was a meeting with the BME community on the 5th October, it seems to have been very positive and a great start in identifying what can be done to encourage members of the BME community to get more involved with the TSSG as well as other forums etc. The TSSG has now also connected with the Race Forum. Silence pointed out that out of the 100 people who attended the 3rd Sector Summit he was the only black member.A book is being produced detailing the slave trade in West Lothian and the people that played a part in it. Everyone is encouraged to obtain a copy. Members of the TSSG are encouraged to be part of a discussion about bringing the community closer together.Funding has been secured through Awards for All, for Carers of West Lothian to do some research on how to engage better with unpaid carers and disabled people in West Lothian, who are a part of the BME community, who may need support and feel isolated.Staff from Carers of West Lothian have attended cultural competency training through MECOPP, if anyone is interested information can be sent out.It was asked where an organisation can reach out if they want to be proactive in widening diversity. Silence offered to help where he can in signposting.**Children Services Plan**The Child Services Plan was sent out with the TSSG papers. It is now out for consultation. This will be the only opportunity for feedback and to highlight any gaps in the plan. This has also gone to the Children and Families Forum.**Strategic Mapping Exercise**Alan highlighted while reflecting on the recent 3rd Sector Summit, diversity meeting, the children and families forum and the role of the working group and the wider 3rd sector representation, it was identified that there is a need for mapping of the councils structure, forums and to identify where the 3rd sector is best placed to sit on working groups and forums. This is best done while there is still an openness for better partnership working with West Lothian Council.This will require a few volunteers from members of the TSSG to help drive this forward. It will hopefully allow the 3rd sector to get on an equal level and help change the begging bowl mentality. People wishing to help will need to represent the needs of the sector and not just the needs of their own organisations.It was pointed out that there was a similar mapping exercise carried out through VSGWL in the past and that it may be a good place to start. It would be good to see the Working Group move forward on a more strategic level in terms of representation from West Lothian Council and to continue with the key membership of Raymond, Alan and Diane.**Partners’ updates – issues/opportunities****Citizens Advice Bureau** * Face to face has been running on a triage basis for those who are particularly vulnerable and video conferencing is being looked into but telephone and email services will be the default for the foreseeable future.
* Staff are back on a 50\50 ratio, with 50% in the office and 50% working from home.
* Volunteers are being phased back and working remotely. Limiting the amount of staff in the office at one time to adhere to social distancing.
* 65% busier than this time last year. Spiked at 80% at the start of lockdown. Looking t further spikes on the coming months.
* Advisor basic training has been taking place through zoom with training materials being adapted to include remote working.
* Looking at new ways of service delivery to make sure we are fully accessible to clients
* There has been a notable increase in Employment enquiries.

**Firefly Arts*** Providing indoor, outdoor, and online services/projects. Very good take up.
* Developed a good relationship with West Lothian Leisure, who have been extremely helpful. They have included Firefly in a funding application for venue relief funding.
* There is a fledgling Cultural Providers Forum which has had 2 meetings so far.
* 6 funding applications currently pending or in writing.

**Signpost*** Courses run for parents are being provided via zoom.
* Staff are still working from home and will be for the foreseeable future.
* Providing one to one meeting through the schools.
* Signpost was quieter while schools were off but now, they are back things are picking back up again.

**Whitburn and District CDT** * 250 (families) clients have already been signed up for the community fridge project with over 500 people being supported.
* New premises have been secured 2 doors along from main premises.
* Trying to maintain the amount of food coming in to support the project.
* Brunch Club is still up and running delivering meals to vulnerable people who cannot cook for themselves.
* Funding through the town centre fund has been secured to develop a community garden. In the process of trying to secure the lease for the land so building can start.
* First Friends of Polkemmet group have met, and it seems to have been successful.

**Carers of West Lothian*** Covid has drawn attention to carers and their struggles through the media.
* Referrals have decreased from social work and health care teams. Fears are that there are carers who are not coping and need support who are being missed.
* Focus is on increasing referrals.
* Many new carers have emerged as a result of the pandemic.
* Working in partnership with media students from West Lothian College to produce 2 promotional videos. This will be targeted at young carers and young adult carers. Hoping to launch these at the beginning of next year.
* Carers of West Lothian have adapted well, and the new innovative ways of working have been well received. It has allowed for a more flexible approach. This will influence the way things are delivered in the future.
* Most services have been reinstated with exception of the community outreach work.
* Hoping to start some outdoor pop up promotions.
* Help is needed in receiving input from carers and disabled adults for the national social care review. If any organisations are linked with adult social care, please get in touch for details on how to help.

**WLDAS*** Brian is back to work after some time off with health issues.
* Most services are back to face to face with exception to the needle exchange programme, which is running as a home delivery service.
* There has been an increase in the need for the needle exchange programme from the usual 6 or 7 per week to 60 per week. When delivering staff have been building trust and the confidence of these new clients, resulting in an increase of people using more of the other services on offer.
* Delivering of prescriptions for the NHS to people trying to detox from alcohol.
* Welfare checks to those who have dropped off the radar.
* GP surgery face to face service will be resuming soon.
* New funding has been secured to help young people 16-25 who have been in care who are at risk of homelessness to address tobacco use.
* There has been an increase in referrals due to people working from home.
* August is usually one of the quieter months but has seen its highest ever referrals with 67 new clients being referred.
* Young people referrals have decreased which will be looked into.
* There is a need for the blood born testing service to resume.

**FJSS*** A lot of services are being carried out via zoom and conference calls.
* Staggered working has been introduced to ensure there is a presence in the office.
* Some clients are being allowed face to face appointments where conference calls are not possible.
* Adapted working to meet safe working standards.
* The research and writing of the book, looking at slavery and West Lothians part in it, was started back before the Black lives matter movement and protests, but has been made even more relevant and needed than ever.

**Children 1st*** The family group decision making is surprisingly working well digitally.
* Anyone deemed vulnerable and at risk can still be seen in person.
* Some young people are back to struggling with the anxiety of school after coping extremely well through lockdown and positively engaging with the school remotely. Schools are back to a hard-line stance on pupil’s school attendance.
* Referrals have stayed about the same.
* Children 1st are looking to no longer use their offices in Edinburgh ad Glasgow.

**Families Outside*** Receiving the same number of referrals.
* Helpline has been inundated with requests for advice and help relating to family members in prison.
* Still home working but have started meeting families outdoors for a walk and chat.
* Peer support and children’s activities have been taking place online.
* Families outside online conference is on 18th November, all are welcome to attend. The theme is Health, Human Rights and Hope.
* Funding was secured through Connecting Scotland to purchase 5 iPads for 5 of our families in West Lothian. Second wave of this funding is open now and can be applied for by any organisations who meet the criteria.

**West Lothian Youth Action Project*** We are part of the food consortium helping families in West Lothian.
* Community Fridge Project is up and running in Craigshill.
* Growing together project in partnership with Almond Housing has been funded through the investing in Communities’ fund.
* Food packages and recipes have been handed out to those children who are in need. This has been identified through the free school meal scheme.
* Some emergency deliveries are still happening.
* Street work is back up and running, with workers out every day apart from a Sunday.
* There has been an increase in the number of young people congregating and drinking alcohol in the streets.
* Befriending is taking place online now, but we are being met with resistance from the young people as they do not like using Zoom.
* Some indoor groups are starting back.
* Musical therapy is something that is being looked into.

**Safe Families*** Providing some outdoor support but nothing indoors yet.
* Support has been mainly via telephone/video calls.
* Still receiving a steady flow of referrals.
* Seeing a lot of social isolation which is having an effect on people’s mental health.
* Started a partnership with a counselling agency which has been great for parents/carers.
* Continuing to deliver food for isolating families.

**Homestart*** The number of referrals has decreased. We will be looking into the reasons for this.
* Looking to recruit a new Family Support Coordinator soon.

**VSGWL update**Phase 2 of the Covid Fund through the National Lottery ended on Friday 16 October with assessments being carried out w/c 19 October. Decisions on the fund and distribution of monies should be completed by the end of October.The £1 million Scotland Loves Local fund has been launched by the Scottish Government for grants of between £500 and £5000 for business/organisations to make their premises Covid safe. Further information is available through the VSG website and social media. The VSGWL AGM will take place via Zoom on 28 October.A survey is being drafted and will be sent out to the people who signed up to volunteer via Ready Scotland. This will allow VSGWL to gather further information on those who are still willing/able to volunteer and to better direct them to suitable opportunities.**WLSEN update**Social Enterprise Restart and Rebuild week will commence 16 November and will be hosted by Senscot. An opportunity to profile Social Enterprises and the good things that are happening. There will be a Universal Basic Income session and the Cross-Party Group for Social Enterprise will be online as part of the week.The Mental Health group is still going strong. Great session was held with Greg Stark. Still awaiting some of the presentation materials from Greg.WLSEN AGM will be taking place on 10 December 2020.**Review of meeting frequency/future agenda items**People will be asked to nominate future agenda items when the link for the next meeting is circulated.It was agreed that TSSG meetings will now take place monthly.**AOCB**There was no further business to be discussed. | **All to consider and advise Alan of interest** |
|  | **Next meeting date**The next meeting will take place via Zoom on Tuesday 17 November at 1pm |  |