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

1. **Present:** Alan McCloskey, Chair (VSGWL), Diane Cameron (WLSEN), James Penman, Minute Taker (VSGWL), Jay Haston (Men Matter/Women Matter), Joanna Van Den Berg (Firefly Arts), Errin Anderson (Polbeth Hub), David MacDonald (Whitburn and District CDT), Angela Moohan (The Larder), Elizabeth Stevenson (Signpost), Alison Wright (Carers of West Lothian), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco), Stuart Barrie (Homestart), Silence Chihuri (Fair Justice System for Scotland (FJSS) Group), Kate Smith, Leoncha Leavy (The Scottish Parliament).

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| **ITEM** | **KEY POINTS** | **ACTION BY** |
|  | **Apologies**Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting. There will be no fixed agenda for the meeting.Apologies – Raymond Branton (Family and Community Development, Koen Van Der Straeten – (The Brock), Stephanie Simpson (Victim Support), Lisa Drinnan (Community Action Blackburn), Matt Pearce (West Calder and Harburn CDT). |  |
|  | Kate outlined her and Leoncha’s role with the outreach and engagement team at the Scottish Parliament. The questions answered below would be fed back to the Equality and Human Rights committee. The main aim is to help Scottish people get involved with the work of the Parliament. Specifically, around the work of committees, legislation and policy to help people and organisations have their voices heard on devolved matters. Notes will be taken, and answers distributed amongst all those present at meeting. Responses will be anonymous. **The bullet points below are answers to the following questions:**1. **How have groups of people been affected by the virus?**
2. **Which groups have been disproportionately affected by the virus and the response to it?**
3. **Have there been specific equality or human rights impacts on groups of people as a response to the virus?**
* People are being left isolated and vulnerable due to lack of internet access.
* Lack of ability to have group meetings having a heavy impact on recovery services.
* Carers are unable to find time away from the cared for person and/or private space in which to have peer support and are isolated as a result.
* Families of children with additional needs and disabilities are not receiving support during these demanding times especially with respite.
* BME communities have been disproportionately affected by the virus.
* Lack of access to mobile phones within BME community.
* PC’s are no longer accessible to some families due to rise in prices.
* Young people with additional support needs will find returning to school challenging due to changes to routine.
* People becoming homeless during the pandemic are being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation despite Scottish Government wanting everyone to be housed. This is not possible due to lack of available housing as many homeless were housed at the beginning of the pandemic.
* There is a lack of peer support for children with additional support needs.
* Some staff within Third Sector organisations are struggling with their mental health due to job insecurity.
* Many organisations were unable to finance a set up where staff can work from home.
* Change of routine having an adverse effect on young adults with additional support needs due to their lack of understanding of the situation.
* PPE not being made available for additional support needs residential homes.
* Practical challenges for shielded groups getting information regarding funding availability due to lack of internet access. Information leaflet drops required in certain situations but have so far been ruled out by West Lothian Council.
* Difficulty finding suitable meeting areas for small groups once lockdown eases where services can be provided while adhering to social distancing rules.
* Families that have suddenly been thrown into poverty are struggling to find the help they need as they do not know where to look.
* Babies and young children are missing key development and milestones due to very little social interaction.
* Concern that, due to the pandemic, some young people may fear going out in public.

**What do the Scottish Government and public authorities (e.g. local authorities, health boards etc.) need to change or improve: as a matter of urgency and in the medium to long term?*** Start allowing small groups to meet as soon as possible especially for those without internet facilities.
* Provide information on what help will be made available for organisations to support working parents when blended learning is introduced.
* Government urged to work in partnership with the Third Sector where there is vast knowledge and expertise and ask where the Third Sector can help.
* Don’t forget about the important contribution the Third Sector has made in holding the community together and continue funding.
* Take long term approach to help save the Third Sector.
* Better integration of Third Sector, NHS and Government is needed.
* Work needs done to increase visibility of carers both paid and unpaid.
* Involve service users in decision making so that services can provide what is required.
* See Third Sector funding as an investment.

Anyone wanting to provide further input can do so via the link below: [The Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on equalities and human rights](https://yourviews.parliament.scot/ehrc/impact-covid-19-pandemic-equalities-human-rights/)Alan will share the results of a wider TSI survey into the impact of Covid 19 on the Third Sector once available. | **Alan (VSGWL)** |
|  | **Previous minutes & matters arising.**The action notes were accepted as an accurate account of the previous meeting.**Matters arising from previous minutes.**It was agreed that Kate and Leoncha from the Scottish Parliament be invited to next TSSG meeting (as above).Recent phase of Wellbeing Fund is closed.  |  |
|  | **VSGWL update**VSGWL has been distributing Volunteer Week information through social media as well as video’s, quotes etc and will continue to do so daily for the duration of Volunteers Week. VSGWL will collate analytics of VSGWL Volunteer Week statistics and distribute round the sector.Applications are being welcomed for the VSGWLThird Sector fund. This is available for small community grassroots organisations and is for grants of between £600 and £2400. Organisations are encouraged to apply and promote where applicable. The closing date for applications is 5 June at 5pm.VSGWL will continue being proactive in making the sector aware of relevant funding opportunities.  |  |
|  | **Organisation updates & misc**It was suggested that the TSSG put together a response to Scottish Government on how we recover from Covid 19 and the Third Sectors role in the recovery and that this could be discussed at the next TSSG meeting. This would be a joint response paper that would then be shared with SCVO, Senscot etc. The agenda for the next TSSG meeting will include ‘future planning for the sector’.Having TSSG meetings every 2 weeks has been hugely beneficial. Good opportunities to find out what is happening in the sector.The Working Group will be reconvening on Thursday 11 June. Some of the discussion today will inform what happens at the meeting. The Working Group must represent all organisations through regular communication with sector representatives.Business Support grants now being accepted for community centres. | **All****The Working Group** |
|  | **Next meeting dates**Zoom meeting every 2 weeks. Next meeting 17 June. |  |