
Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership

Management Committee
20 January 2010



Third sector interface – progress report

1. SUMMARY

The research commissioned by the Council on behalf of the group developing the interface has been completed. The results have been shared with partners and initial discussions have taken place. These discussions have been positive and agreed to progress based on principles outlined in the research report.

This paper reports the findings of the research and also suggests features of the interface that are requirements from a CPP perspective for the effective operation of the interface.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the CPP Management Committee:

1. Note the findings in the research report
2. Endorse the principles for development of the interface
3. Review and approve the suggested CPP requirements as a key stakeholder in development of the interface

3. BACKGROUND

The third sector intermediary organisations, Council, Government and CPP representatives met in June 2009 to discuss development of the third sector interface. They agreed to commission research to support development of the interface given the strong differences in opinion at that time.

The research is now complete and the final report is appended.

4. KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

The key findings from the research can be summarised as follows:

Third sector support needs

- Wide range of support providers used
- Different types of support needs
- Support may be needed in identifying support needs
- Training often seen as a staff activity

- Matrix of support requirements used in the research is potentially a useful tool to help organisations identify their needs

Provision of support to the third sector

- No cohesive approach to co-ordinating the delivery of support services
- No systematic approach to assessing/ updating support needs Argyll wide
- No coherent approach to signposting
- Local intermediaries generally working to capacity – some others potentially being underutilised
- Not possible to assess support outcomes

The report also considered the pros and cons of different models for the interface – focusing on a formal partnership versus a single intermediary. The status quo was not considered as an option because all parties recognise that change has to happen. The key message is that whatever structure is chosen for the interface, the process is as important as the final outcome. There is a significant need to build trust between the different organisations involved.

The process of working on the interface in recent months has clearly helped to develop more trust as the tone and output of the meeting to consider the research findings was much more positive than the previous meeting in June.

5. NEXT STEPS

The research report suggested three principles could be used to help develop the interface. They are that the interface:

- Can demonstrate it understands and reflects the needs and aspirations of all parts of the third sector in Argyll and Bute, and the environment in which they operate
- Must build trust with other partners and give confidence that it provides an authoritative voice in representing the sector
- Must be able to demonstrate that it is making the most effective use of the resources available to it locally, and harness the wider resources available in a strategic way

All the parties agreed to adopt these principles to guide the next stages and to build on the dialogue between third sector organisations on the Third Sector Partnership (TSP). The TSP is now considering the research report in more detail.

To date the CPP has not had any dialogue with the TSP about the specific details of the interface – any discussion with the CPP as a key stakeholder needed to wait until the research report was published. The needs of the CPP have to be considered by the TSP as part of the process to develop the interface.

6. CPP REQUIREMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE INTERFACE

The original outcomes specified by the CPP as part of the challenge to the third sector intermediaries are still valid. They are:

- More active third sector, supporting more community activity
- Better quality support for third sector organisations across the whole of Argyll and Bute
- Equitable access to support for all communities in Argyll and Bute
- A clear voice advocating the interests of the third sector in Argyll and Bute locally and nationally
- Stronger and more active social enterprises winning contracts to provide services

The operation of the interface will help to achieve these outcomes – provided the agreed structure and processes satisfy all stakeholders, including the CPP.

The following are suggested requirements that the CPP should consider as a key stakeholder in the development and future operation of the interface. From a CPP perspective, the interface should:

- have a partnership agreement to make the operation, remit and scope of the interface clear
- be focused on coordination of support to the third sector and effective representation at all levels of the CPP. This should in turn affect which organisations are actively involved in the operating of the interface
- be able to evidence processes, systems and networks that demonstrate effective engagement with all parts of the third sector, from small voluntary organisations through to social enterprises, across the whole of Argyll and Bute. If the interface uses a model based on membership, partners will need to provide reassurance that consultation processes engage and represent the broad third sector and are not focused on the membership alone
- have clear processes in place for appointing representatives to CPP meetings and evidence that those representatives have a clear understanding of their role. The CPP will not fund the costs of representation outside any funding allocated to the interface by the Government and public sector partners locally
- have agreed processes for planning work and allocating funds to support that work to ensure effective coordination and delivery of work programmes and efficient operation of the interface. This is especially important if the interface has a partnership model.
- have effective connections to national bodies supporting the third sector to demonstrate that national capacity and capabilities are used effectively in Argyll and Bute. There is no expectation that interface

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funding will be disbursed to national bodies, other than through contracting to support specific actions in Argyll and Bute

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11 January 2010

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Appendix: Third Sector Support in Argyll and Bute, ODS Consulting