

Sector welcomes Assembly procurement postponement

Agreement with WCVA's suggestion that procurement on a new pattern of advice services should be postponed to ease the effects of the recession has been welcomed by sector groups.

At the Third Sector Partnership Council meeting, it was announced that the Legal Services Commission, WLGA and the Welsh Assembly Government would not proceed with the present plans for joint commissioning in 2010, pending a feasibility study on the issue.

Citizens Advice Cymru Director Fran Targett said CAB services across Wales were already facing the effects of the downturn on their clients.

'The increase in demand, year on year for the quarter ending December 2008 showed that redundancy advice was up 162% and Job Seekers Allowance was up by 68%.

'Most worryingly, debt advice on mortgages and secured loans increased by 40%,' she added.

'We welcome the Assembly's announcement that the proposals for major changes in the funding of advice will be delayed as we believe that the advice sector needs to concentrate its effort on helping its clients at this time - and not on responding to restructuring or bidding and procurement.

'However, the maintenance - in real terms - of funding streams from local government and the Assembly which allow the advice sector to directly help clients in greatest need is vital and not yet assured.'

Cymorth Cymru hailed the announcement as 'good news'. Director Joy Kent told Network Wales: 'Although we recognise the worsening economic climate, we believe that this is a time to invest more in the services that work with the most deprived communities and excluded individuals - not less.

'Otherwise, when the economic situation improves, those individuals and parts of Wales that were disadvantaged in more favourable economic times will be left behind even more.'

Equalities research and publications news

New publications are available which look at the equalities evidence base and issues in Wales.

Equality issues in Wales: a research review by EHRC

This report provides a review of research and statistics which relate specifically to Wales by race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion.

Covering research published between 2000 and October 2008, it focuses on poverty and social exclusion, the economy and labour market, health and social care, education, housing and public and political life.<http://tiny.cc/z59Cb>

Equalities evidence guides by Welsh Assembly Government

The guides are part of a series commissioned by the Office of the Chief Social Research Officer (OCSRO) to support the Welsh Assembly Government's mainstreaming equalities strategy to develop an accessible and comprehensive evidence base. They provide a review of the possible sources

of evidence for each equality strand within six policy areas and cover the following areas:

- financial inclusion
 - actual and perceived safety of public transport in Wales
 - access to secondary and elective health services
 - formal and informal education for 0-19 year olds
 - barriers to economic wellbeing or participation in rural Wales
 - participation in physical activity and sport
 - cross cutting equality and social justice issues arising from direct and indirect impacts of climate change, flood risks and flooding
- <http://tiny.cc/FzfE8>

Two events were held to launch these publications, in North and South Wales. They were well attended, including a good range of third sector organisations. If you would like to discuss these publications or the equalities evidence base in Wales and how it can be improved, please contact Jessica McQuade at WCVA on 029 2043 1759 or email jmcquade@wcva.org.uk.



News and information for Wales from:
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff Bay,
CF10 5FH t 029 2043 1700 f 029 2043 1701
www.wcva.org.uk t 0800 2888 329

Minister urges local government to back sector during the recession

Welsh local councils have been urged to maintain their support for the third sector during the current recession.

In a letter to the leaders of all 22 unitary authorities, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government Dr Brian Gibbons says he wants to reinforce the principles of collaborative working, particularly under the spirit of the Welsh Assembly Government's Code of Practice for funding the sector.

He describes the Voluntary Sector Scheme as having paved the way for the Assembly Government's long-term working relationship with the sector. The Code of Practice, he adds, sets out the key principles which underpin Assembly Government funding for the sector and ensuring best practice.

The Code has recently been revised to take into account best practice guidance on procurement and full cost recovery and 'aims to deliver an effective and sustainable funding framework' based on principles including:

- Early and constructive dialogue - a chance to discuss proposals well in advance of formal application deadline.
- Timely decisions - notification of grant approvals for each financial year by 31 December.
- Fair funding levels - funding for the sector should be determined no differently than for other sectors.

- Full cost recovery - grant funding based on principle of full cost recovery.
- Security of funding - up to five to seven years for strategic core funding and commitment for the life of any specific projects which are funded, providing firm year one funding and clear baselines for subsequent years.
- Fair procurement - procurement funding based on price, not cost.
- Payment in advance - provision for advance payment of grant, where a clear financial need is established.
- Fair and reasonable treatment - prior discussion and reasonable notice before any policy changes or decisions which would lead to withdrawal or significant reduction of grants.

The revised Code of Practice is available at: <http://tiny.cc/OA8E5>. Complaints can only be made on the grounds that the requirements of the code have not been observed, and should be directed to the Chair of the Finance and Compliance Subcommittee, c/o Voluntary Sector Unit, Communities Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ.

WCVA Chief Executive Graham Benfield OBE welcomed the letter and urged both councils and local voluntary organisations to work closely together during this challenging time, and ensure a fair approach to funding.

Offering a lifeline to isolated groups

Community Network, the telephone conferencing charity, has been successful in its bid to Awards For All and has received a grant to fund telephone support groups in Wales.

Telephone support groups help those who cannot travel for many reasons, including older people, people with disabilities, those living in geographically remote areas or people who suffer from an emotional or physical ailment.

Whatever the reason, these groups have proved successful in alleviating loneliness and the resulting health and emotional effects. Community Network wants to make sure that the most isolated and socially disadvantaged people benefit from the Awards For All grant.

Susan Robinson, Community Network Project Officer said: 'The success of this project relies on the terrific co-operation we have received from third sector organizations across Wales over the past few years. We want to continue to work in partnership with them to reach local people, especially older people, disabled people and others experiencing isolation in rural and urban areas of Wales, who would benefit from being in regular contact with others over the telephone.'

'My job is make it as easy as possible to get things going and I'm available to give practical advice and support.'

To set up a telephone support group contact Sue Robinson on 01373 451569 or email sue@community-network.org.

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CRB checks to change

WCVA's Criminal Records Unit (CRU) is keen to draw attention to the ministerial statement made on 19 March by Meg Hillier, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Identity in which a revised date for the duty to register with the Scheme has been announced as 26 July 2010.

However, from October 2009 eligibility for Enhanced checks will expand to include more employment and voluntary positions and Standard CRB checks will no longer be available for those working with children or vulnerable adults.

In the intervening period it is important to remind organisations of the importance of continuing to carry out CRB disclosure checks for staff and volunteers working with vulnerable groups where eligible. Please note that neither CRB checks nor Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) checks, when enforceable, are a replacement for the safe recruitment and employment practices that all employers should already follow.

WCVA CRU will continue to highlight major announcements concerning ISA through its website alongside awareness raising events. Current information can be found at www.isa.gov.org.uk and similarly www.crb.gov.uk for information on the CRB disclosure service. The Vetting and Barring Scheme contact centre has now opened - phone 0300 123 111 Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 5.30pm.

Rewarding good work

Voluntary organisations across Wales will be put in the spotlight during 2009 thanks to the second annual *Network Wales Awards*.

The *Network Wales Awards*, supported by Class Telecommunications, have been set up to showcase the work of the third sector and provide national recognition for outstanding achievements.

Individuals can nominate their own organisation for an award and can also nominate other organisations in separate categories. The categories are:

- Class award for best communications
- Green award
- Most admired organisation

Each nominated organisation will receive a certificate of commendation and the winners will be presented with an award at WCVA's annual conference dinner in December.

Last year's winners included Cartrefi Cymru, for a magazine written and edited by its service users, Ponthafren Association, for spending the past year determinedly reducing its carbon footprint while on a very limited budget and Fairbridge De Cymru, for working with hard to reach young people and giving them new skills enabling them to re-engage within society. The deadline for receipt of nominations is 18 September 2009.

To receive a nomination form for the *Network Wales Awards* please contact the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329 or visit www.wcva.org.uk.

New website will help third sector organisations have their voices heard

Voices for Change Cymru is a WCVA project supported by the Big Lottery Fund. The project provides a wide range of services to help third sector organisations understand and influence policy, legislation and decision-making at local and national levels.

One of these services is the Voices for Change Cymru website which has just been launched. Visit the site at www.voicesforchangecymru.org.uk to find lots of information on local and national politics, how Welsh political structures and processes work, ways to engage with decision makers, and how to plan a campaign.

There are tips on the opportunities that now exist for third sector organisations to have their voice heard, latest news items, relevant training events and plenty of links to further information.

However, perhaps the most unique part of this brand new website is the Monitoring Service section which will be updated every Monday. It will help you to find out what's happening within the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government in the areas that interest you.

So, if you are interested in environmental issues, click on the environment and sustainability page and find out about current committee inquiries, consultations, recent publications and proposed legislation in this area.

The website holds this information in 16 different categories from children and young people to transport. It's updated every week, so by visiting the website regularly, you can keep in touch with what's happening and find out how to influence the things that matter to you.

www.voicesforchangecymru.org.uk



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WCVA presents evidence on Welsh language LCO

Earlier this year the Welsh Assembly Government began the process of applying for the right to legislate on the Welsh language by putting forward a Legislative Competence Order (LCO).

This is the first stage in the legislative process and requires the agreement of the National Assembly for Wales and both Houses of Parliament. The ultimate aim is to create a Welsh law, called an Assembly Measure, to 'confirm official status' for both the Welsh and English languages, 'secure linguistic rights in the provision of services', and establish a Language Commissioner.

Information about the LCO was sent to all WCVA members in February inviting comments on this issue to help inform WCVA's response to the consultation on the LCO being carried out by an Assembly Legislation Committee.

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WCVA gave written and oral evidence to this committee at the end of March based on the feedback received from a variety of third sector organisations across Wales. In its evidence WCVA made the following key points:

- We agree that, as set out in the LCO, the National Assembly for Wales should be able to make laws on the promotion and use of the Welsh language. This position has also been agreed by WCVA's Board

- We feel that more clarity is needed about what kinds of third sector organisations would be covered by any future Assembly measure on the Welsh language; so far attempts to tease out the kinds of organisations and services that will be covered have focused on private sector examples.

- We feel that a voluntary demand-led approach has already achieved a lot for the Welsh language since the 1993 Act and could continue to do so in the future.

- We would therefore recommend that the correct option would be to maintain the status quo for those non-public service delivering third sector organisations, whilst at the same time investing in targeted ways to enable all types of third sector organisations to develop their ability to work bilingually and offer bilingual services on a voluntary basis.

The Assembly Legislation Committee consulting on the LCO will be reporting on its work in early June – check WCVA's Voices for Change website for information on how the LCO progresses: <http://www.voicesforchangecymru.org.uk/what-s-occurring-monitoring-service>

WCVA would be pleased to continue receiving comments from its members and the wider third sector as we will also be inputting into any future consultation that will take place if the LCO progresses to Assembly Measure stage.

Please send any comments to policy@wcva.org.uk.

The next editions of this WCVA national supplement will be available at the end of May, July, September and November 2009 and January 2010.



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