

Voluntary Sector Scheme

Third Annual Report

FINAL

Foreword by Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

To be forthcoming

Draft Summary statement from Tom Jones

To be forthcoming

Introduction

This is the third report on the Welsh Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Scheme and covers the financial year from 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003.

The establishment of the Voluntary Sector Scheme was a significant achievement of the National Assembly's first term.

Over the past year, the Scheme, together with the dialogue and co-operation it has enabled between the Welsh Assembly Government and the voluntary sector, has given rise to a number of notable developments including:

- Criminal Records Bureau Unit - established to administer CRB checks on behalf of voluntary organisations in Wales.
- Code of Principles for working with UK organisations in Wales - provides a commitment to early consultation in advance of any decision to significantly alter services in Wales.
- Active Communities Initiative - the outcomes from a Cardiff University research study will feed into Active Communities II, due to begin in autumn 2003.
- Local Government Guide and indicators - a comprehensive guide for closer working between local government and the voluntary sector.
- Social Economy Framework Group - established to propose a framework and action plan for developing the social economy.
- Building Stronger Bridges – supporting the voluntary sector in providing services in the Health and Well-being arena.
- Code of Practice for Funding – sets out the key principle underpinning Assembly funding for the voluntary sector.

Additionally the Welsh Assembly Government Voluntary Sector Liaison Group has been re-launched, a set of new standing orders for Ministerial meetings is under construction and new processes for gathering and tracking voluntary sector spending are being introduced.

Voluntary Sector Partnership Council (VSPC)

The Minister for Health and Social Services has chaired the VSPC, which comprises 11 Assembly Members (reflecting party balance); representatives of 21 identified categories in the voluntary sector and representatives of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

The Scheme requires the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council (VSPC) to meet at least twice in a calendar year. During the period covered by this report, three meetings have taken place on the following dates and at the locations shown:

10 th May 2002	Cefn Coed Community Centre, Merthyr Tydfil
18 th October 2002	Conwy Business Centre, Llandudno Junction
14 th February 2003	Newport Centre, Newport

It is VSPC policy to encourage members of the public to attend meetings. These are spread around Wales and wherever practicable are held in community-owned buildings, such as community centres.

A full record of VSPC meetings is available at:

www.wales.gov.uk/themesvoluntarysector/content/partnershipcouncil/meetings

The VSPC has continued to monitor the implementation of the Scheme this year and there has been significant progress in several areas such as Tracking of Funding, a review of the Active Communities programme, Code of Practice for Funding, Policy Integration Tools and building the capacity of networks.

The VSPC has also enabled discussion between the voluntary sector and the Welsh Assembly Government on future opportunities for working together. It has been a key forum to guide progress on issues such as the Criminal Records Bureau and Welsh Assembly Government relationships with UK voluntary organisations.

Twice - Yearly Ministerial meetings

The Voluntary Sector Scheme requires twice-yearly meetings between Welsh Assembly Government Ministers and representatives of the relevant voluntary sector networks. At least one of these meetings is tied in with the Assembly's Budget Planning Round and focuses on funding issues. These meetings are key to ensuring cross-Assembly implementation of the Scheme and:

- review the operation of the Voluntary Sector Scheme within the Minister's area of responsibility ;
- review the level of consultation and discussion that has taken place between the network and the appropriate Minister / Committee;
- review past activity;
- consider current issues;
- anticipate forthcoming issues and
- consider resources.

A joint event between the voluntary sector and Assembly Agriculture and Rural Development Division was held as a direct outcome of a Ministerial meeting. This was a great success in terms of establishing contacts and fostering understanding, with the result that similar joint events have since been discussed at other Ministerial meetings.

The requirement for meetings with each Minister to take place at least twice in a calendar year was achieved in 2002. Details of the meetings held since the last Annual Report are as follows:

Minister for Education and Life-Long Learning	29 th April & 18 th November
Minister for Environment	25 th April & 13 th November
Minister for Finance, Local Government & Communities	29 April & 31 st October
Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language	23 rd May & 13 th November
Minister for Health & Social Services	23 rd May & 21 st November
Minister for Rural Affairs	16 th May & 21 st November
Minister for Economic Development	29 May 2002

A full record of Ministerial meetings is available at:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/themesvoluntarysector/ministers-e.htm>

A new set of standing orders for these meetings is being prepared and will be taken forward as part of the wider review of the Voluntary Sector Scheme in Autumn 2003.

Voluntary Sector Scheme Action Plan 2002-03 - Overview

The first Voluntary Sector Scheme Action Plan was agreed in December 2001. The VSPC has monitored implementation of the Scheme. The Action Plan has been updated and revised as appropriate.

The draft revised Action Plan was presented to the Partnership Council in February 2003. Members' comments will inform the new Action Plan which will be taken forward into 2003/04, pending the outcome of the review of the Voluntary Sector Scheme required after the Assembly election.

The Action Plan comprises six sections:

Partnership And Proofing Policies

Information and Understanding

Consultation

Funding the voluntary sector

Volunteering

Community Development

Progress against each is shown below.

Partnership And Proofing Policies

Policy Tools

Central to the Scheme is the way in which the Welsh Assembly Government works in partnership with the voluntary sector to develop effective policies and programmes for Wales.

The Strategic Policy Unit has been developing a series of new tools designed to facilitate greater transparency in policy-making and enable better partnership in developing policies, consultation and proofing procedures. The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council has advised regularly on their development. The work has been ongoing since the first year of the Scheme and this year has seen much progress.

The new tools comprise:

- ***Consult Wales***; web-based templates and databases
- ***Policy Gateway***; intranet guidance on policy-making
- ***Integration tool***; proofing and evaluation tool

Consult Wales, the Policy Gateway and the Integration tool provide a set of complementary tools, which address the issues of transparency and proofing identified in the Scheme.

The tools will be launched on the Internet in November 2003.

Voluntary Sector Liaison Group

The Voluntary Sector Liaison Group, an internal group of officials from each Assembly Department having contact with the voluntary sector, continued to be co-ordinated by the Voluntary Sector and Inclusion Division. The aim is to

provide a forum for exchanging information and ensuring that the principles and commitments of the Scheme are being upheld across the Assembly. A meeting of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group was held in December 2002 and a presentation given by the Wales Funders Forum. Role awareness seminars are planned for autumn 2003.

Dialogue and Co-operation

New voluntary sector representatives

During the summer of 2002, the voluntary sector held the second round of nominations for the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. The voluntary sector networks agreed to revise the composition of the 21 voluntary sector categories by introducing a category for Older People in place of Benevolent organisations. The new category will be represented by Age Concern Cymru.

In addition there were other changes that involved new organisations representing the networks. These included

- Employment Network – Chwarae Teg replaced by Genesis
- Gender Network – Wales Assembly for Women replaced by Wales Women's Coalition
- Volunteering Network – British Red Cross replaced by Volunteering Policy Forum.

In addition, encouraging participation and to reflect wider interest groups, the Interfaith Council represents the Religion Network. This is a body that is inclusive of all of the main faiths in Wales.

Building stronger networks

The Welsh Assembly Government released £126,000 for the Partnership Capacity Building Fund for 2002/03 – an additional £42,000 from 2001/02.

The aim of the fund is to support the nominated voluntary sector networks in their role as representatives on the Partnership Council.

The Networks receive funding on receipt of a quarterly report outlining how they liaise with the other organisations within that sector; how information is fed back and how views are sought so that representative at the VSPC can represent the views of all organisations within their sector. -.

The additional resources provided by the Assembly were targeted at the networks most in need of support and who were invited to bid for the funds.

The following were successful:

Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales	£14,000
Welsh Overseas Agencies Group	£1,700
Voluntary Arts Wales	£4,800
Community Justice Network	£2,000
Council for Wales Youth Voluntary Services	£5,750
Disability Reference Group	£8,400

Examples of Dialogue and Co-operation

The Assembly Government works with the voluntary sector in a range of different ways. Some examples of the activities in the last year are:

Agriculture and Fisheries Policy Division had regular contact with bodies from the voluntary sector, particularly through various advisory and consultative groups set up with the other UK Fisheries Departments, to consider fisheries policy issues. Regular dialogue also took place through various local and regional committees created to monitor Objective 1 grant schemes. Among groups who sit on these bodies are the World Wildlife Fund, RSPB, Wetland Association and many recreational and commercial fisheries associations.

Health Promotion Division's Health Promotion Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme is well publicised and a meeting with representatives of the voluntary sector has been arranged to discuss the grant scheme structure and how to improve communication.

Age Concern Cymru, The Royal National Institute for the Blind, the Wales Council for the Blind, the Energy Saving Trust and National Energy Action assist Public Health Strategy Division in delivering the Keep Well this Winter campaign.

Wales Trade International include representation from the voluntary sector on their International Trade Forum and regional focus groups membership through the involvement of such organisations as the export clubs and the Ethnic Support Business Programme. In addition to providing advice and feedback on WTI activities, these groups have been involved in the formulation of the first International Trade Strategy for Wales, which was launched by the Economic Development Minister on 27 March 2003.

The voluntary sector is represented on the Welsh Assembly Government's Community Regeneration and Social Inclusion Policy Board, which brings together senior level representation from a range of organisations. The Board aims to give strategic direction to the Assembly Government's social inclusion policies and the Communities First programme in particular.

Housing Directorate are involved with many voluntary sector representatives (e.g. Welsh Women's Aid, Shelter Cymru, Welsh Tenants Federation and Tenant Participation Advisory Service) who have membership of the National Consultative Forum on Housing in Wales. These people are then able to filter information back to their respective networks. Additionally, the voluntary sector is able to access the Directorate web-site to communicate/liaise as appropriate.

Public Health Policy Division have constituted a HIV/AIDS action group which has representation from the voluntary sector including members from Positive Tongue and Terrance Higgins Trust, who work with them in developing Action Plans for HIV/AIDS work. They have close contact with Cardiff Hep Cats, Mainliners, Hepatitis C Resource Centre and The UK Assembly on Hepatitis C who are contributing to a Task and Finish Group currently working on the development of a Hepatitis C strategy for Wales.

Equality and Employment

The European Equality Partnership (EEP) has been in existence since 1997, set up through European Technical Assistance funds to increase the equal opportunities profile within the European programmes through awareness raising and training. The European Equality Partnership is comprised of representatives from Chwarae Teg, Equal Opportunities Commission, Disability Wales, All Wales Ethnic Minority Association, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Welsh Language Board, Commission for Racial Equality, Stonewall Cymru, Disability Rights Commission, Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Development Agency, Welsh European Funding Office, European Affairs Unit and the Equality Policy Unit.

The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has worked in partnership with Chwarae Teg to deliver a series of training days to WEFO desk officers and Regional and Local Partnerships, to ensure that equal opportunities is fully recognised as one of the main cross cutting themes of the 2000 - 2006 programmes and integrated into all projects.

Information and Understanding

Further information has been shared on Welsh Assembly Government funding for the voluntary Sector (see Tracking Funding below).

The Welsh Assembly Government has published two pamphlets containing information on the Voluntary Sector Scheme and the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. These have been widely distributed and have been well received.

Consultation

The main vehicle for improving consultation between the voluntary sector and the Welsh Assembly Government is Consult Wales – one of the suite of policy tools (see *Partnership and Proofing Policies*). The voluntary sector was consulted on Consult Wales during the autumn and there have been two papers on the suite of policy tools to the VSPC this year.

Consult Wales has been widely welcomed by the voluntary sector networks involved with the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council now looks forward to monitoring the effectiveness of Consult Wales and ensuring that any voluntary sector concerns are taken into account.

The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) has consulted widely with community and voluntary organisations in, for example, the allocation of indicative financial allocations to the Objective 1 local and regional partnerships. All local partnerships in the Objective 2 and Transitional programme area also have indicative allocations for community development. These partnerships have been working closely with WEFO to encourage bids to the community measures such as umbrella bids via the partnerships in order that community groups can benefit from the availability of structural funds.

Agriculture and Fisheries Policy Division has consulted several voluntary organisations on policy initiatives or new developments. For example, the RSPB and Wales Environment Link were consulted on how changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) would impact on the environment. Both

RSPB and National Trust are members of working groups on the reform of CAP and take active part in discussions. Wildlife Link, the National Trust and Women in Agriculture have also been consulted when changes are being considered to particular areas of agriculture policy.

Network Management Division consulted Sustrans regarding cycling schemes and organisations such as Age Concern Cymru, Disability Wales and the Wales Council for the Blind were consulted about secondary legislation and codes of practice concerning streetworks. Local disability groups and organisations such as the Welsh Cycling Union, the Ramblers Association and Friends of the Earth Cymru were consulted on road schemes.

Food and Farming Development Division has have engaged with stakeholders across the spectrum from environmental groups to farming unions on the design of our proposed new agri-environmental schemes - including, from the voluntary sector, Wales (Environment) Link and RSPB. They have been involved at the early policy development stage and will continue to be involved as policy is taken forward.

Agriculture Research and Development Division consult the Rural Partnership for Wales and the Partnership steering group, both of which include voluntary sector representation, when formulating policy decisions.

As part of the consultation process for Well Being In Wales Public, four of the equality groups that the Assembly Government supports: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Forum Wales, Wales Women's National Coalition, AWEMA and Disability Wales, were invited to take part in a half-day discussion forum on Well Being in Wales. This proved very informative for Public Health Strategy Division and feedback from the groups was also positive. Agreement was made to meet again later in the process to repeat the exercise.

In June 2002, Cadw published guidance on providing physical access to historic buildings to help reconcile listed building legislation with the

requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The report was produced following a wide-ranging consultation exercise, during which organisations from the voluntary sector - notably Disability Wales - provided detailed comments, which were fundamental in the drafting of the final report.

The Communities First Support Network (CFSN) is one of Communities Directorate's main partners in delivering the Communities First programme. and are fully consulted on all policy and programme proposals. The Network comprises a number of voluntary organisations and includes the Black Voluntary Sector Network, the Community Action Network, Community Development Cymru, the Development Trusts Association, Groundwork Wales, Menter a Busnes, the Wales Co-operative Centre and the WCVA. The voluntary sector also provided valuable contributions to programme development on the Communities First Trust Fund and the Community Facilities and Activities Programme.

The voluntary sector has been involved in developing policy on the Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies in a number of specific ways:

- collaboration in developing policy at a very early stage. The voluntary sector was represented on a consultative group that helped to devise partnerships policy from the outset;
- involvement on a Task and Finish Group which developed particular aspects of the policy (i.e., governance and accountability of the Strategies model) and which subsequently formed the basis of Ministerial advice;
- extensive consultation with all stakeholder groups. Voluntary sector comments played an integral part in the re-drafting of regulations and guidance. This has ensured a more clearly defined role for the sector;
- voluntary sector participation in a series of seminar/consultative events. At each of the 6 events, voluntary organisations were well represented.

Funding The Voluntary Sector

Tracking Funding

The Welsh Assembly Government has continued to provide information on funding of the voluntary sector and the report for 2001-02 was discussed at the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council in October 2002.

Information was also provided on spending by Health Authorities and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.

Members noted that information on funding for the Voluntary Sector was improving both in quality and coverage although there were still gaps to be addressed.

In response, the Welsh Assembly Government is introducing a system that will provide the following data on a quarterly basis:

- the organisations which are in receipt of funds from the Assembly Government;
- funding stream – which Main Expenditure Group (MEG), Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) or grant scheme the payment is made from;
- Assembly Government division/group making the payment.

These will be achieved by June 2003.

Additionally a diversity breakdown will also be provided using the following categories:

- Disability;
- Minority ethnic;
- Women;
- Lesbian, gay & bisexual;
- Young people;
- Welsh speakers.

When the system is fully operational details will be forwarded to ASPBs as a model for financial data capture.

Grants Guide

In February 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government published a revised guide to all grants available exclusively to the voluntary sector, in both hard copy and electronic form.

The Welsh Assembly Government Guide to Voluntary Sector Grants can be accessed at: <http://www.wales.gov.uk/themesvoluntarysector/grantsguide-e.htm>.

Assembly Divisional Funding To the Voluntary Sector:

Division	Total Spent on Voluntary Sector 2002-03 (£000's)
Agriculture	
Food & Farming Development Division	50
Rural Policy Division	313
Communities	
Urban Unit	7,049
Substance Misuse Branch	380
Communities and Social Inclusion Unit	3,828
Voluntary Sector Team	6,662
Crime Reduction Unit	9
Social Deprivation Unit	579
Housing Directorate	5,720
Economic Policy	
Economic Policy Division	16,037
Education and Training	
Pupil Support Division	30
Schools Management Division	221
Training Skills and Careers Policy Division	10,300
Lifelong Learning Division	117
Youth Policy Division	701
Teaching and Leadership Division	85
Environment, Transport, Planning	
CADW	200
Environmental Protection Division	391
Countryside Division	715
Planning Division	212
Health and Social Care	
Children and Families Division	6,293
Primary & Community Health Division	800
Health Promotion Division	417
Public Health Protection Division	68
Social Care Policy Division	6,021
Health Information and Facilities Division	10
Strategic Policy Development	
Strategic Policy Unit	62
Local Government	
Local Government Modernisation Division	8
Culture Welsh Language and Sport	
Culture and Welsh Language Division	12,100
TOTAL	79,378

Health Authority Allocation – Voluntary Sector Funding

Health Authority	2002-03 £000's	Percentage of overall allocation (%)
Bro Taf	7,148	54
Gwent	2,002	15
Dyfed Powys	1,478	11
Morgannwg	1,107	9
North Wales	1,470	11
Total Allocation	13,205	100

Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies – Voluntary Sector Funding

ASPB	Total Spent on Voluntary Sector 2002-03 (£000's)
Arts Council for Wales	13,083
Countryside Council for Wales	1,571
ELWa	10,316
Environmental Agency Wales	241
Sports Council for Wales	9,245
Wales Tourist Board	519
Welsh Development Agency	8,018
Welsh Language Board	1,662
Total Allocation	44,615

Guide to Relations between local government and the voluntary sector

This was published by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Welsh Local Government Association and aims to provide guidance, practical advice, principles and recommendations to be adapted and adopted locally to further improve relationships and the delivery of services in the devolved Wales of the 21st Century.

There has already been much progress in Wales in the development of local government-voluntary sector relationships, which include the creation of Joint Liaison Committees, local Compacts and the introduction of Community Strategies.

This draft guide was circulated, in mid December 2002, to all County Voluntary Councils, voluntary sector members of the VSPC and the voluntary sector who attended a consultation day, in September 2002, on what indicators should appear in the guide. The Welsh Local Government Association has consulted local government and the Welsh Assembly Government and the consultation period ended in January. The Guide was finalised in March 2003 and will be published shortly.

The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council will receive reports on what progress has been made.

Code of Practice for Funding for Voluntary Sector

The publication of the Code of Practice was an important milestone in implementation of the Voluntary Sector Scheme. The code was greatly welcomed by organisations seeking funding from the Assembly. It is a living document and is available both in ring binder form and via the Internet at:-

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/themesvoluntarysector/content/codeofpractice>

Following the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government Code of Practice for Funding the voluntary sector, the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council established a working group to update and progress the Code and monitor its implementation. The working group met in October 2002 and March 2003. The first reprint of the amended version will be in October 2003.

Mechanisms are now in place for the voluntary sector and the Assembly to work together to ensure that the Code is reviewed twice a year and updated as required.

Assembly Government Divisions have been advised that all voluntary sector grant schemes should adhere to the Code. Additionally, all Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) have been required to confirm that they too are applying the Assembly Government's Code to their grant schemes where they involved the voluntary sector. Responses indicate that the terms of the code are being applied consistently.

The Assembly Government is further committed to ensuring that ASPBs develop and implement a code of practice for funding in consultation with the voluntary sector, based on the principles of the Assembly Government's Code.

Local authorities will be encouraged to develop their own codes of practice for funding the voluntary sector as outlined in – The guide to the Voluntary sector and Local Government Working Together in Wales.

Volunteering

The Active Communities programme is the Assembly's key programme to promote volunteering in Wales. 15 projects were supported through 2002-3. The Assembly Government commissioned Cardiff University to conduct a research study to assess how successful the programme had been to date and how the experiences could inform longer-term policy.

The outcomes from the research and the discussions it has initiated will feed into Active Communities II, due to begin in autumn 2003.

The baseline survey "Exploring Involvement in Volunteering in Wales" has been completed and will allow for a long term assessment of volunteering trends.

The Assembly Government continued to support the Millennium Volunteers Programme, which has succeeded in attracting more than three and a half thousand young people into volunteering projects across Wales. It also contributed to the Wales-wide celebration of volunteering by resourcing the provision of certificates for Volunteers' Week.

Community Development

The Communities First programme was launched in June 2001, when the then Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities announced the first tranche of communities included under the programme. Since that time, the programme has progressed quickly. The key achievements are that:

- £42.3 million has been allocated over financial years 2001-04 to support the implementation of the programme at a local and national level;
- the Generic Communities First Guidance has been revised and guidance for both Local Authorities and Co-ordinators has been produced;
- 79 Communities First Partnerships have been established;
- expenditure on the Communities First Trust Fund has topped £1.2m;
- a contract specification has been developed and tenders invited for an interim evaluation of the Communities First programme, including the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework;
- a Complaints Procedure has been established and good practice guidance issued; and
- a Communications Strategy has been developed and implemented.

The Communities First Trust Fund provides small grants to local community and voluntary groups to support a wide range of activities linked to the regeneration of Communities First areas. It is managed by the Communities First Support Network on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government and is administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Money has now been spent in all local authority areas on a range of activities. Since the Trust Fund opened for business on 8th April 2002, over 1668 application packs have been issued, with 995 applications received: 619 of these have been approved, with £1.261million spent to date.

The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) works closely with local community and voluntary groups and organizations such as the WCVA to promote the development of quality projects. The depth of expertise available within the community and voluntary sectors is reflected at all levels of partnership working, for example, through representation on the Objective 1 & 2 Programme Monitoring Committees, local and regional partnerships and the Objective 1 Community Assets Strategy Partnership (CASP).

The WCVA provides, jointly with WEFO, the secretariat for CASP. It has played an important role in producing, through extensive consultation, the CASP strategic framework, which provides a focus and prioritisation of activities for delivering the community economic regeneration aims of the Objective 1 Programme. It also fulfils a key role in developing regional projects, again through consultation with WEFO and others. The Social Risk Fund for example gives smaller community and voluntary groups easier and speedier access to European monies.

UK Voluntary Organisations Working Within Wales

Last year, the Children's Society decided to withdraw support for Welsh projects. Following this decision, the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council recommended that UK voluntary organisations working in Wales be invited by the Assembly and the WCVA to a joint seminar to discuss the implications of devolution for their current decision-making processes and accountability for Wales.

50 key organisations were invited to a seminar held at the Celtic Manor Hotel, Newport on 6 June 2002. The seminar was regarded a great success by all those involved.

Following the seminar the draft Code of Principles was agreed by the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council on 18th October 2002. The draft Code was issued for consultation by the Assembly Government in December 2002. The consultation period ended on 28th February 2003.

The aim of the code of principles is to maintain and strengthen good working relationships between Welsh Assembly Government, UK Voluntary Organisations working in Wales and other key stakeholders.

It aims to provide a basis for increased dialogue and understanding, to ensure that the Voluntary sector and the assembly work together to achieve shared aims. The code of principles aims to recognise the particular role that UK voluntary organisations play in Wales.

Responses to the consultation have broadly welcomed the introduction of the Code of Principles. Officials have collated these and are considering what revisions may be necessary.

The code will be launched in autumn 2003.

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

In May 2002, members of the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council expressed concern about the difficulties many voluntary organisations in Wales were experiencing in obtaining CRB checks on volunteers and staff. A working group was set up which reported to the VSPC on 14th Feb 2003. The working group recommended that a new body should be established to administer checks on behalf of voluntary organisations in Wales.

Proposals submitted by the WCVA to set up a new unit were agreed in March. Funding has been made available to support its implementation. The new service is expected to come into operation by September 2003.

Social Economy Framework Group

In 2002, the voluntary sector put forward proposals to the Economic Development Minister for an initiative to bring together work on the social economy, and to develop a strategy for future support. At the same time, the Assembly Government had formed a view that a framework was necessary for the social economy.

In response, the Economic Development Minister established a Social Economy Working Group to propose a framework and action plan for developing the social economy. The initial terms of reference are to:

- review the activity across all Departments that are currently supporting social economy activity in Wales; and
- ensure complementarity between various pieces of work looking at the social economy that are already under way or agreed.

The Group's work involves:

- identification of the main support mechanisms specialising in the social economy and an overview of their scope and target markets.
- a programme to promote the wider social economy sector.
- greater emphasis on skills, education and training within the social economy and resources/delivery programmes.

The Group has taken full account of the wide range of support mechanisms including organisations and funds available.

The membership of the group comprises officials from the Assembly Government Economic Policy Division, Communities Directorate and Voluntary Sector and Inclusion Division; and representatives of the Social Economy Network, Wales Council For Voluntary Action, All Wales Ethnic Minority Association, Welsh Development Agency, Education Learning Wales Agency and Welsh Local Government Association.

The Group presented its draft framework in June 2003, with the agreed framework to be launched at a conference later in the year.

Building Strong Bridges

The Building Strong Bridges report, produced by the National Assembly for Wales in 2002, aimed to strengthen partnership working between the NHS and the voluntary sector at national and local levels. 23 recommendations were made, including the appointment of Health and Social Care Facilitators in each County Voluntary Council. The report suggested that such posts could make a valuable contribution by developing better links, partnership working, networks and support between the NHS and the voluntary sector.

Building Stronger Bridges identified the very real and beneficial role played by the Voluntary sector in providing services in the Health and Well-being arena.

The Voluntary sector acts as a main provider in:

- the Hospice movement;
- Mental Health provision;
- Drug and alcohol services.

Building Stronger Bridges highlighted issues of concern where the voluntary sector, despite its contribution, was not recognised as being a full and equal partner in the delivering of the Assembly Government's Health and Well-being agenda. Some of the key findings were:

- communication, networks and partnership working across health and social care need to be strengthened;
- additional capacity is needed to meet the increased demands and to help realise the potential of the voluntary sector;
- the introduction of Health and Social Care Facilitators within the voluntary sector would help to overcome many existing problems;

- there are 25,000 Voluntary organisation in Wales, 17% of these relate to health and social issues. There are others that are not health related but impact on people's health and well-being such as housing, environmental protection.

In October 2002, the Minister for Health and Social Services announced a £3million programme over three years to meet the costs of implementing Building Stronger Bridges, including the cost of employing facilitators in Health and Social care in the voluntary sector. The majority of the £1million allocated in 2003–04 will go to the County Voluntary Councils (CVC's).

This will enable each CVC to appoint a Health and Social Care Facilitator whose main role will be to support the voluntary sector to develop and sustain strong partnerships with each other and with other agencies involved in health and social care.

Strategy for the Voluntary Sector

At the VSPC meeting on 18th October, the Assembly Government announced plans to publish a long-term strategic vision for the voluntary and community sector.

The Assembly Government commissioned County Voluntary Councils to consult voluntary organisations on local issues. Their responses will inform the statutory review of the Voluntary Sector Scheme following the May 2003 elections.

The Way Forward

Section 114 (5) of the Government of Wales Act requires that:

“ The Assembly shall keep the scheme under review and in the year following each ordinary election (after the first) shall consider whether it should be remade or revised”

Much has been achieved since the inception of the Voluntary Sector Scheme in July 2000. We also recognise that there is more still to do. The forthcoming review of the Voluntary Sector Scheme will enable us to reflect upon the experience of the last four years and to consider ways in which the Assembly Government and the voluntary sector can work more closely together to achieve common goals. The review will lead to the development of a new Voluntary Sector Scheme Action Plan.

Voluntary Sector Partnership Council Membership

Voluntary Sector Representatives

<i>Period</i>	<i>Main Representative</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Deputy</i>
Pre Feb 2003	Fran Targett	<i>Advice and advocacy</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Claire Bryant	<i>Animal welfare</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Lydia Bassett	<i>Art, culture and heritage</i>	Roger Fox
Pre Feb 2003	Catriona Williams	<i>Children and families</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Gordon Gibson	<i>Community</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Barbara Roberts	<i>Criminal justice</i>	Chris Arnold
Pre Feb 2003	Vanessa Webb	<i>Disability</i>	Rhian Davies
Pre Feb 2003	Graham Price	<i>Education and training</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Janet Owen-Williams	<i>Employment</i>	Bob Hargreaves
Post Feb 2003	Ruth Marks	<i>Employment</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Marc Welsh	<i>Environment</i>	Merfyn Williams
Pre Feb 2003	Patsy Richards	<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	Siobhan Haywood
Post Feb 2003	Cilennie Cianne	<i>Ethnic Minorities</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Audrey Jones	<i>Gender</i>	
Post Feb 2003	Mary Slater	<i>Gender</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	James Crowe	<i>Health and Social Care</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	John Puzey	<i>Housing</i>	Wendy Bourton
Pre Feb 2003	Ruth Hopkins	<i>Intermediaries</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Keith Roberts	<i>International aid and emergency relief</i>	Stephen Thomas
Post Feb 2003	Sarah Stone	<i>Older People</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Aled Edwards	<i>Religion</i>	

Pre Feb 2003	Wendy Williams	<i>Sport and recreation</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Catrin Fletcher	<i>Volunteering</i>	Chris Hopkins
Pre Feb 2003	Veronica Wilson	<i>Youth</i>	
Pre Feb 2003	Tom Jones	WCVA	Rhiannon Bevan
Pre Feb 2003	Margaret Jervis	WCVA	Robert Hutchings
Pre Feb 2003	Graham Benfield	WCVA	Phil Jarrold

Assembly Members July 2000-May 2003

Lorraine Barrett AM	Labour
Jane Davidson AM	Labour
Jane Hutt AM (Chair)	Labour
Brian Gibbons AM	Labour
Lynne Neagle AM	Labour
Pauline Jarman AM	Plaid Cymru
Helen Mary Jones AM	Plaid Cymru
Owen John Thomas AM	Plaid Cymru
William Graham AM	Conservative
David Melding AM	Conservative
Mick Bates AM	Liberal Democrat

Secretariat

Sanjiv Vedi
Neil Surman
Anthony Pugh
Paul Dunhill

BACKGROUND TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SCHEME

Legal Requirements

Section 114 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 requires the Assembly to make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary sector organisations as follows:

“114 – (1) The Assembly shall make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary organisations.

*(2) In this section “relevant voluntary organisations” means bodies (other than local authorities or other public bodies) whose activities –

are carried on otherwise than for profit, and*

(b) directly or indirectly benefit the whole or any part of Wales (whether or not they also benefit any other area)

(3) In determining the provision to be included in the Scheme the Assembly shall consider how it intends to exercise such of its functions as relate to matters affecting, or of concern to, relevant voluntary organisations.

(4) The Scheme shall specify –

how the Assembly proposes to provide assistance to relevant voluntary organisations (whether by grants, loans, guarantees or by other means),

how the Assembly proposes to monitor the use made of any assistance provided by it to relevant voluntary organisations, and

how the Assembly proposes to consult relevant organisations about the exercise of such of its functions as relate to matters affecting, or of concern to, such organisations.

(5) The Assembly shall keep the scheme under review and in the year following each ordinary election (after the first) shall consider whether it should be remade or revised.

(6) The Assembly may not delegate the function of making, or remaking or revising, the scheme.

(7) The Assembly shall publish the scheme when first made and whenever subsequently remade and, if the scheme is revised without being remade, shall publish either the revisions or the scheme as revised (as it considers appropriate).

(8) The Assembly shall consult such relevant voluntary organisations as it considers appropriate before making, remaking or revising the scheme.

(9) After each financial year the Assembly shall publish a report of how its proposals as set out in the scheme were implemented in that financial year.

Development of the Scheme

The Scheme is unique to Wales. There is no other such statutory Scheme elsewhere in the UK. It represents a major step in the way in which the Assembly works with the voluntary sector in Wales. Other countries have expressed an interest in adopting a similar approach to that of the Scheme.

In developing the Scheme, the Assembly worked closely with the voluntary sector, drawing upon the work and negotiation that had informed the Compact between the Government and the voluntary sector in Wales, pre-dating the

Assembly. Nevertheless the Scheme was a new development. It put the Assembly's commitments onto a statutory footing and proposed a number of innovations, such as the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council and twice yearly meetings with Ministers, which are intended to improve and mainstream dialogue between the voluntary sector and the policy makers and thus ensure that the views of the sector are considered at all levels of policy development and implementation.

The draft Scheme was subject to extensive consultation between 1 March and 24 May 2000 culminating in an Assembly plenary debate on 5 July 2000 when the National Assembly for Wales's Voluntary Sector Scheme was made with the full support of all political parties.