



Supporting the Third Sector Project



Whole Family Wellbeing Fund Case study 3

Positive Planning: Dundee



Background

This year (2022-23) is the first year of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF), with the £32 million allocation aiming to support Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to:

- Build transformational capacity within each CSPP.
- Test new system approaches to family support in line with strategic plans.
- Scale existing transformative and effective approaches which align with the National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support, with a view to making the case for their integration into longer term local investment plans.

Both **Part 3 of the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014** and the **Statutory Guidance on Part 3 (Children's Services Planning) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** highlight the important role that the third sector plays within the local Children's Services Planning process. Multiple roles for the third sector are defined including:

- The preparation of, and consultation on, the Children's Services Plan, to ensure the plan is fully integrated and makes best use of all resources in the area to deliver on local priorities.
- Providing insight on the needs of the local population.
- Joining up with other local partners to agree priorities and actions.
- Identifying all the links and key transition points between services.
- Representing the interests, views, concerns, and wishes of people who use, or are likely to use, any children's or related services.
- Acting as the strategic group responsible for the development and delivery of the plan.
- Ensuring collaboration at every level. (i.e., strategic, operational, frontline).



Context

Dundee Third Sector Interface (TSI) is a partnership between Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action (DVVA) and Dundee Social Enterprise Network. DVVA hosts a third sector Children, Young People and Families Forum which has many members and is chaired by the CEO of DVVA.

DVVA has representation within the Children's Services Planning Partnership (CSPP). For example, its CEO is a member of the Children and Families Executive Board, alongside additional third sector members. As a result of our commissioned work on the WFWF, we can already see the potential to increase and strengthen our work alongside the CSPP. We have representations on other strategic groups related to children and families e.g., Fairness Initiatives, Planet Youth, and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership.



The view from DVVA...

Family support

We know from our local poverty report and our local and city plans the shared gaps and needs in Dundee. Through stakeholder meetings, we have built a mind map of the identified needs and gaps that groups or organisations feel are required to be met. This map is directly informed by the voices of service users. Many organisations had already identified their project idea some time ago and it simply required relevant funding.

Our stakeholders had a clear view of what the local needs were from the beginning and how these align with their proposals. Their understanding of the fund and its main purpose was also clear. We feel that this has also been strengthened from the hard engagement work that has been carried out with them.

We have some partners who are not looking to bid into the fund, either for Year 1, or at all. However, their willingness to engage with our Community of Practice and start collaborations or new partnerships to improve and develop services has been welcomed. We plan to increase our reach with statutory partners to ensure this work continues.

Engagement with children, young people and families

Lived experience voices will be reflected through our application process. We ask those submitting proposals to ensure these voices have been considered within their application. Our stakeholders have informed us that they have lots of data and evidence from these voices already. We therefore agreed not to duplicate this work, hence the creation of this section on our application form.



Our steering group also agreed to accept additional pieces of evidence to support applications should the applicant wish to do this. This could include photos and voices from projects that have been successful and are looking to be scaled up.

We have not held any focus groups prior to launching the fund due to the length of the consultation period. However, people with lived experience will be included in reviewing and commenting on the applications submitted. We are holding a focus group discussion for lived experience and will hold this prior to the decision-making panel meeting. Group members will be asked to review project ideas, whether these meet the needs in Dundee that they are aware of and how each bid will support meaningful collaboration. Their comments will be collated and given to the panel.

We also plan to hold further meetings to gather views alongside our Community of Practice. This will make engagement with them is more meaningful as we would like to make sure this process is not tokenistic. We have a considerable amount of experience in working alongside experts and are therefore well versed in meaningful engagement. The Engagement Worker will be having introductory meetings with anybody who wishes to be part of this. They are free to attend the initial meeting to review bids and/or at subsequent meetings, and support will be offered on an ongoing basis if required. Organisations are approaching their clients or service users who would be suitable and willing to be part of this group.

Third sector collaboration in WFWF

DVVA won the bid to project manage this fund earlier this year. This was for a commissioned service for one year. A Fund Development Manager was recruited to lead this alongside an Engagement Worker, both of which were full-time roles. We also have one day of administration support from a worker already within the organisation. The posts started in April.

Our stakeholder group was initially born out of the Children, Young People and Families Forum, chaired by DVVA. This has helped create a solid foundation for the consultation and engagement work to start. Essentially, we were able to build upon strong, existing working relationships.

Many new partners have been added into this group since we have been communicating about the fund. Interestingly they are not 'new' to working in Dundee, rather they have had limited opportunities to connect and engage with other professionals. **The fund has provided the ideal opportunity to bring groups and organisations together.** We initially started with 42 stakeholders and at the time of writing we now have 118 members.

Our stakeholder meetings are held fortnightly, and we have based our approach simply on fairness and transparency. We know from other networks we manage that sharing information through different streams helps keep people informed. Everyone has the right to access this information regardless of how many meetings they attend. We have increased our engagement for the time period that the fund is live and are holding weekly check-ins to answer questions. A summary of the discussion is emailed to the whole group following each check-in. We plan to continue the engagement by creating a Community of Practice when the fund has closed.

We continue to hold many partner meetings outwith the larger stakeholder meetings. This has helped build partnership bids (including the development of many new partnerships), answer queries and increase understanding. We are flexible and hold these in whatever format suits the partners best. This has been aided by the fact that the Fund Development Manager and the Engagement Worker are solely working on this fund, with no other projects or pieces of work that divert time away from the fund. In between stakeholder meetings we send out communications via email with any updates or feedback from steering group meetings.

Our Engagement Worker has offered support to all groups and organisations to develop their proposals further, if they require it. We know that many organisations run with a large pool of volunteers and often do not have the time to write funding applications. Interestingly, we have found there has not been a high demand for this, only one organisation has required additional 1:1 support. We feel that between our frequent stakeholder meetings and partner meetings we provide support at a relatively high level already and have perhaps met this need.

Our steering group oversees the governance of the fund and will hold and distribute funds. They will meet to make decisions on applications that have been submitted. The Fund Development Manager provides reports to keep them updated on the engagement work being carried out: it is very much a partnership between us with positive reports on both sides.

Terms of reference for both groups are in our guidance for all to read, including on our website. The stakeholder group is kept informed of any updates that result from communication with the steering group to maintain the transparency we have created.

Learning

As a team we are already reflecting on the engagement approach that we have taken. This is overwhelmingly positive, but it would have been beneficial to have a longer consultation period with stakeholders, for example a lead in of six months. It has been extremely busy and there was a lot of work to do very quickly.

We are also mindful of the future work we intend to do. The fact that the WFWF team is only contracted for year one of this funding is something we are considering when planning ahead. We need to consider how the Community of Practice and any focus groups with lived experience can, if needed, continue following our posts ending. Of course, we will be honest and transparent from the start with both groups and will plan an exit strategy for these as required.

It has been very interesting and rewarding to lead on the engagement and consultation for this fund. The connections that have been made within a short space of time have been incredible. We know that there is an appetite for the engagement work and the dynamic team at DVVA have enabled this to be harnessed and developed with amazing results. We can already see how our Community of Practice can link with volunteer strategies, good governance for third sector groups, training opportunities which provide a standard that all our successful projects start with and connections with other sectors including mental health, older people, substance use services etc. We are thinking wide and long-term with this fund, using the WFWF as the bridge to support transformational change.

Conversations we would like to see happening, include those on comparative salaries between the third sector and statutory sector, the fairness of non-sustainable funding (often this is short-term, with repeated applications) and the pressure that the third sector experiences with appropriate recognition being given. I believe it would be positive if we can ignite and support these to take place within the Community of Practice.

Recommendations

The third sector needs to feel it has a valued voice around the table. We are hearing many partners express positive feedback that our engagement approach has started to give them hope this will change.

There is an appetite for networking and building on existing working relationships. Many new partnerships have formed, and they are keen not to lose these but rather add to them through our Community of Practice. Opportunities to come together and share learning and resources are extremely valuable and need an investment of time.

Coordinating all this is an important role but one that can really drive the transformational change that is required. Adding this task to a current role is not the answer, it needs a dedicated worker to do this with the passion and enthusiasm that is required.

Our role with this funding has ensured it has had a far reach into third sector that may not have been possible without this commissioning process. We have utilised all networks and available contacts.

Crossing over into other areas is important long-term. We have kept informed, and included, statutory partners throughout the process and have encouraged them to share communications within their networks too.

The discussions around linking projects and services throughout the city, and the important point of sustainability all round, is one that requires input from *all* sectors.

Stakeholder feedback

We have provided some feedback from stakeholders involved in the process below.

"It's refreshing your approach to engagement...how great to have transparency!"

"Dundee is so different to other areas nationally; you are all about collaboration and it's amazing to see."

"The willingness of partners shows today...shouldn't lose this momentum even if we are not successful in our bid, it's the way forward for working."

"Even if we don't get the funding it has opened up so many positive doors."

"You've done an amazing job getting information out and connecting with people."

"Top slicing for your posts has given you protected and devoted time, very useful."