

## **Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire**

**(Third Sector body carrying out activities relating to health or social care)**

**Do you know how and when you can get involved with the Integration Authorities (IAs) to influence decision making?**

VASLan (Third Sector Interface for South Lanarkshire) and the Third Sector are now fully engaged and involved. VASLan and Third Sector representatives participate on the Locality Planning Groups; Strategic Commissioning Group and Integrated Joint Board. There are also Third Sector representatives with subject matter specialisms e.g. Mental Health on themed groups.

Involvement has grown from a light touch tokenistic attendance to a position of full engagement / empowerment alongside partners. The transition phase reflects the development of 'both parties' (Voluntary Sector & Statutory bodies) as relationships were established and encouraged to flourish. It is appropriate to acknowledge there is now shared understanding and acceptance of the capabilities of the Voluntary / Third Sector.

In the last few months South Lanarkshire has appointed a new Director of Health and Social Care, following the retirement of the predecessor. She regularly puts out a blog detailing updates on progress and regularly asks for people's views and thoughts on Health and Social Care. VASLan also distributes the blog through their e-newsletter to the Third Sector. The new Director has also taken time to meet with relevant third sector organisations involved in the process and there are numerous indications of seeking a wider productive relationship between the Sector and Integration Authorities.

**Were you consulted in the preparation of the strategic plans or involved with the work of the Strategic Planning Group?**

VASLan and the Third Sector were fully involved in the development phase of the strategic plans. Several events were held across South Lanarkshire with representatives of health and social care staff and the third sector (as well as carers etc.). People were asked to consider the main priorities and rate them in order of funding levels (additional, same level or less funding). The information was used to prioritise the key themes under strategic commissioning.

**Have you been involved with the work of the Integration Authority following publication of the strategic plan?**

Yes. A Partnership decision following the production of the strategic plan recognised a funding investment within the third sector - (£650,000 allocated per year initially for a three year period but subsequently reduced to two years as a result of unexplained process delays). Third Sector organisations were invited to identify a series of interventions complementary/additional to statutory services and beneficial to communities. All funded projects were required to identify where the project linked to the 9 national health and wellbeing indicators. The application process commenced in November 2015. Additional leverage was highlighted by 76% of the approved applications having identified match funding in support of their application.

Funding was approved at the Strategic Commissioning Group on 11th March, 2016. The funded projects included: Self-management of conditions; health education; peer support; information and signposting; alternative therapies; encouraging independence; respite; one-to-one support; physical health; social prescribing; connectivity; mental health and befriending.

VASLan monitors the projects on a quarterly basis to ensure they continue to deliver the outcomes, monitoring results are reported to health and social care partners.

### **Have you been involved with the work of the localities/what involvement would you like to have?**

Within South Lanarkshire there are four Locality Planning Groups. As stated earlier, VASLan and a Third Sector Representative (currently the Chair of the Third Sector Forum) attend all of the Locality Planning Groups. Also involved are representatives from Carer organisations and Locality Health and Social Care Forum (formerly Public Partnership Forum). These meetings are still in their infancy stage (4 meetings) and the appointment of Locality Planning Managers holding specific responsibilities is a very recent development. Additionally the change in leadership of the Director of Health and Social Care has introduced another influence which will have a bearing on the future shape and format of the local planning bodies.

VASLan's third sector data (Locator Tool which highlights third sector organisations and activities by locality) is a prominent information tool which is accessed via the VASLan website and available for Communities, public sector organisations, third sector etc. to use.

### **Do you think your involvement with the IAs has had an impact on decision making?**

It is not immediately evident that any Third Sector input has had a significant bearing within or in the decision making process. Given the slow rate of progress however this is not surprising as we are only beginning to build momentum as an IJB. The Third Sector have been involved from day one and are key to bringing alternative and potentially innovative solutions to the complexities of the integrated health and social care agenda. The Third Sector in co-production with Partners were instrumental in identifying wide ranging issues in the process of compiling the Strategic / Commissioning Plan. Within the wider picture very small steps but symbolically a very significant direction of travel for partnership development.

### **What could be done to improve the communication from the IAs?**

The involvement and inclusion of the Third Sector Interface facilitates a range of communication and establishes a vital bridge to communities and organisations. It is essential that Partners recognise and support the flow of information to ensure the continuity of the message. VASLan are currently looking at how we can improve our communication on Health and Social Care. Currently we publish health and social care items in our e-newsletter, and feedback to the third sector at our locality Third Sector Forum events, these are currently held quarterly in four localities.

We are also reviewing our communication practices following feedback from the Third Sector Forum events with a view to providing additional information related to health and social care through our website.

We also work closely with the Health and Social Care Communications Officer for South Lanarkshire, who we accommodate in our office one day per week. We ensure that all health and social care communications are posted to our website and in our e-newsletter. This good relationship means that we are able to signpost the Communications Officer to promote third sector improvements/stories under health and social care.

### **What could be done to ensure greater collaboration and engagement in the decision making process of IAs?**

There has been an acknowledged change of greater collaboration since the appointment of the new Director of Health and Social Care in South Lanarkshire. Previously there could have been a perceived feeling of tokenism. Also, with the introduction of funding to third sector there has been more involvement with a range of key public sector officers enhancing understanding and providing practical opportunity to demonstrate and confirm capability of the Third Sector as an untapped resource.

Integration Authorities should ensure that Third Sector Interfaces are the conduit between statutory partners and third sector organisations, thus ensuring no commissioning advantage is gained by an individual organisation. TSI's regularly health check third sector organisations; help upskill organisations and encourage co-production. With these checks in place, plus robust monitoring TSI's can ensure that the third sector can effectively deliver cost effective support to health and social care authorities.

We also need to ensure that Health and Social Care boards follow the National Standards for Community Engagement; asking the public for their views, in an open, transparent way and not giving them closed options.

The agenda we are faced with is advancing and increasing relentlessly! Be prepared to explore the unthinkable and take the risk. Without risk we will be successful in achieving nothing!