



## **Understanding Asset-Mapping and Partnering in Scotland**

A report into the activities and resources of Scottish voluntary organisations

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has received Scottish Government funding to “*bring community assets to the health and social care community planning table*”. Partnering with Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), SCVO’s ambition is for Scotland’s third sector to play a greater role in improving wellbeing in communities and in supporting individuals to support themselves and others. This ambition can make a direct and immediate contribution to the ongoing health and social care integration agenda

Taking a lead from the *Building Healthier and Happier Communities* programme, SCVO sought to establish a method to map third sector organisations and how they network their activities. The collected data needs to be relevant and contemporary to inform strategic commissioners at local level of what is available and what co-production support may be required. Specifically, IJBs should have a fuller understanding of third sector activities and services which support the national health and wellbeing outcomes. This template will include both data and intelligence.

SCVO and TSIs already capture a wealth of data from charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes. Across Scotland, all TSIs have access to the MILO platform, a key tool which helps capture, organise, promote and understand the third sector and its assets. However, the landscape in which the TSIs operate is complex and dynamic which makes it difficult to gather data and ensure its currency. Part of this research was to strategically review the capacity of TSIs to gather and maintain data on their local sector.

There is also a need to understand how third sector organisations communicate and interact with statutory organisations and other third sector organisations at the local level. This is needed to assess and promote asset sharing and to identify gaps in the provision of services.

SCVO commissioned the Employment Research Institute of Edinburgh Napier University to undertake this work with the objective of :

- Mapping the provision of third sector support for health and wellbeing and uncover the degree of partnering and sharing and understand the contribution of third sector organisations to health and wellbeing, the communities they serve, their partnerships and the efficacy of these relationships.

The completed report reviews of the assets based approach, how this relates to the integration of health and social care along with the opportunities and potential for third sector partnering.

The researchers reviewed the pilot work undertaken in East Dunbartonshire and then applied the methodology to three further TSIs. The report is structured by first providing a broad assessment of demand for services, then the supply side as contained in Milo is presented. These are then compared to findings from a bespoke survey. Then from the application of Social Network Analysis, the pattern of interaction between organisations in the area is presented.

The TSIs invited to participate in the study were selected on the basis of geographic spread, differing socio-economic structures and previous experience of social networking. The study areas were: Falkirk – an urban population with rural fringes, Aberdeen City – a highly urbanised city location and Argyll and Bute – representing a more rural and dispersed population.

The findings of the three area studies were compared and conclusions drawn with recommendations made to promote the integration of third sector organisations and allow them to deliver even greater benefit. Suggestions for “rolling-out” the approach taken here to other authorities conclude this report.

From the pilot study in **East Dunbartonshire** the method of data collection does seem to work, however to comprehensively map assets more information requires to be collected such as how specific services are offered, which assets are held and if and how these assets can be shared. Through the Social Network Analysis, it is clear that third sector organisations are connected, but such connections are often enabled through central actors.

In **Falkirk** third sector organisations (TSOs) provide services which address specific demands within communities. The network of connections amongst TSOs in Falkirk is fairly dense and cohesive, mainly via important hubs of the CVS, Falkirk Council, NHS and Social Work

The population of **Aberdeen City** is relatively younger than Scotland as a whole, are relatively economically better off and experience lower rates of unemployment.

Accordingly, service provision by TSOs focusses more on education and training, advice and information, volunteering, younger people, and mental health. The social network is very cohesive and centralised mainly around the TSI, Aberdeen Council and the NHS

**Argyll and Bute** is mainly a rural population which is ageing yet the top services provided by TSOs are for young people, volunteering, training and education, sport, leisure and recreation and advice and information – only then comes services to older people. Around a third of the TSOs surveyed provide services to 10 people or less, reflective of the rural location. The Social Network Analysis suggests that the network is not as dense and cohesive as in the more urban areas studied.

### **Comparisons**

The Social Network Analysis also shows variations in the density and cohesiveness of the social networks in the regions. Reflective perhaps of the variation in geographies, Aberdeen City reports a strong, cohesive network focused around the local authority and NHS. Falkirk reports a less strong network but still focused around central hubs such as Falkirk Council, NHS and CVS Falkirk. The more rural region of Argyll and Bute reports a more dispersed and less cohesive network.

The nature of TSO provision is different in each authority as would be expected, showing evidence of responsiveness to the needs of the resident population. Social Network Analysis (SNA) represents a powerful tool for highlighting and understanding connectedness within the third sector. The research demonstrates the ability of SNA to show the links between TSOs and thus the network of assets and skills sets within communities.

The SNA demonstrates that TSIs, the local authority and the NHS all have key roles in the network, acting as hubs and should offer the facility to allow TSOs to connect with one another. TSIs have a key role in these networks. Further work should be done to enable TSIs to manage the network relations and increase connectedness.

## Recommendations

The process of mapping assets has produced valuable learning, which should be used to inform future delivery and policy:

- The value and role of TSI and communities' local knowledge, role and experience is crucial when undertaking asset mapping and should be the starting point to co-produce all asset-mapping activities.
- Strategic level 'buy-in' from all partners and potential recipients must be secured, to ensure fuller understanding, commitment, management of expectations and maximum influence for planning, commissioning and delivering of integration.
- Using a tool such as this to broaden engagement has enabled reach to a wealth of health and wellbeing organisations across Scotland. Going forward, the ethos should be 'aim big, start small' to be more focused. This will allow efficient use of resources, and enable reporting in line with Integration Authorities' localities and strategic plans, to highlight particular local needs and inform decision-making at local level.
- Many surveyed organisations indicated a limited awareness of the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes. For many there is a lack of clarity of their wider contribution to health and wellbeing of their communities. Focus groups should be held with participating partners and organisations to review how asset mapping and SNA might increase awareness of health and wellbeing, strengthen their connections and increase their understanding and opportunities to influence and participate in the integration agenda.
- A review of resourcing of TSIs and how best to support their capacity in capturing assets should be undertaken.
- There is a range of programmes, many funded by Scottish Government, mapping assets across Scotland. It would be helpful for collective lessons learned to be captured and more conjoined work to be taken forward by national intermediary organisations and funded by Scottish Government.
- TSIs have a crucial role in ensuring communication and provision of encouragement to TSOs at the local level. This role needs to be recognised to secure their place in the social networks and as managers of the network. The Social Network Analysis model should be re-examined to allow wider understanding of the capacity of TSOs to net future needs of each region.

The full report and further information on SCVO's Healthier Happier Communities can be accessed here: <http://www.scvo.org.uk/building-healthier-and-happier-communities/>