



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**
Third Sector
Support **Wales**

Briefing for the local elections in 2022

The Voluntary Sector in Wales

HOW MANY VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS ARE THERE IN WALES?

6,000+

REGISTERED CHARITIES

44,000

VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

53% OF THE CHARITIES IN
WALES ARE MICRO CHARITIES

(Income less than £10,000)

32% OF THE CHARITIES IN
WALES ARE SMALL CHARITIES

(Income less than £100,000)

TOTAL INCOME IS

£1.2 BILLION

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING IN WALES?

28% OF PEOPLE IN WALES
VOLUNTEER EACH YEAR

ESTIMATED VALUE OF

£1.7 BILLION

938,000 VOLUNTEERS
CONTRIBUTING

145 MILLION HOURS

Source: [WCVA Data Hub](#)

About Third Sector Support Wales

[Third Sector Support Wales](#) (TSSW) is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales. It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

We work with citizens, volunteers and third sector groups to identify and address what matters to them. We have four pillars of activity that make up our universal offer: volunteering, good governance, sustainable funding, and engagement and influencing.

The importance of a thriving local voluntary sector

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, local charities and community groups proved themselves to be essential. They supported communities with food and prescription deliveries, provided advice to people who were shielding, began befriending services, organised volunteering efforts, and provided mental health and wellbeing support.

The evidence is clear – when the foundations are strong, local voluntary sector activity can thrive. For example, a [study into mental health](#) during the pandemic by Mind found that “community hubs and voluntary sector networks” played a key role in supporting mental health.

Many voluntary sector organisations have faced increased demand and decreased income in the last few years, and this could have a significant impact on the people who they support, as well as their ability to collaborate with council services.

In 2022, Wales will elect new councillors. This election provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen the foundations of the local voluntary sector.



Co-operation and Engagement

Public services are better when citizens and communities are engaged in both the planning and the delivery of them. As a result of this, the voluntary sector and governments have collaborated to ensure that these conversations happen consistently and effectively. This has included creating the [National Principles of Engagement](#) and promoting the collaborative ways of working embedded in the [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act](#). Whilst this has delivered new ways of working in some areas, its roll out has not been universal and we are still looking to changing the culture around engagement in some public bodies. We are increasingly concerned that the move to regional bodies will further exacerbate these challenges.

Local authorities should ensure that all parts of their work is informed by, and developed with, citizens and communities who will be affected. CVCs are in a good place to facilitate this work as they already have links with communities across their areas. Local authorities should also push for better engagement from regional bodies of which they are a part.

Volunteering

Throughout the pandemic, we saw how valuable volunteering was to communities; voluntary activity was a lifeline for many. A [report from the Wales Centre for Public Policy](#) also shows that volunteering benefits the wellbeing of the volunteer too. Across Wales, TSSW provides local support for volunteering activities and leads national work to increase volunteering. This work helps match volunteers and opportunities. During the pandemic, we worked with local authorities and health boards to find volunteers for community activity and within the NHS. Following the election, local authorities should work with their local CVC to increase the scope for providing volunteering opportunities.

Local authorities should work with other public bodies to promote CVCs as the best place to provide this volunteering activity, with co-ordination amongst public services in a local area.

Community spaces

When the pandemic forced many community centres and local hubs to close, many people felt cut adrift from their communities. However, this was a not a single event – we have been losing community spaces across Wales for a number of years due to pressure of local finances and changing economic trends. In some parts of Wales, there are not enough spaces to sustain community activity. Local authorities can help provide these spaces through the community asset transfer process. However, we have found that in some parts of Wales, this process is either deficient or seen as a

way to cut costs. Support may also be required to help communities take ownership of assets currently in the private sector that are at risk of being lost.

Local authorities should ensure that their community asset transfer process is smooth, open and fair to potential recipients. They should also consider how best to support other assets in their communities.

Sustainable funding

Local authorities continue to provide funding for voluntary sector organisations. However, this funding has significantly reduced as local authorities have faced budget pressures. Many voluntary sector organisations also saw a significant drop in income during the pandemic, as fundraising opportunities were unavailable.

Local authorities should re-consider the value of investing in voluntary sector organisations, due to the significant impact that this investment can have on improving people's wellbeing, and in preventing costs in future. This would help local authorities meet the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Finally, local authorities should also provide multi-year funding settlements for voluntary sector organisations.

Advice and support

Every voluntary sector organisation needs to be agile in these challenging times, and even those that are well-prepared will need to adapt in order to be prepared in a few years' time. For example, we have seen in the last few years how important it is for charities to develop their skills in relation to digital service provision, and in supporting all of Wales' diverse communities. No local authority would be in a position to offer this specialist advice to every charity and community group in its area, which is why TSSW is funded to do so.

Every local authority should be working with its local CVC to ensure that it is adequately resourced and supported to deliver this advice, and to support local authorities when they wish to engage with volunteering and voluntary activity.

This briefing was produced by Third Sector Support Wales. For more information, please contact your local CVC or e-mail policy@wcva.cymru.