



The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

The Role of Third Sector Interfaces

This Advice Note sets out the role of the Third Sector Interface organisations in relation to integration activities



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The Role of Third Sector Interfaces

1. Purpose

This note is supplementary to the guidance on preparing a Strategic (Commissioning) Plan¹.

This note makes clear the Scottish Government's intention that Third Sector Interfaces (TSI's) have a key role as advocates of the third sector, in relation to the role of the third sector and integration of health and social care, as set out in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. Building on the work of TSI's to provide a catalyst to the Scottish Government's ambitions for the third sector to play a greater role in public service reform, not least in planning, design and delivery of services, TSIs are positioned to act as the conduit for the third sector in relation to integration activities.

2. Background

There are 32 TSIs in Scotland – one in each Local Authority. Established in 2009 the TSIs build upon an extensive history and knowledge of their sector by means of their predecessor or component organisations. As such some TSIs are single integrated agencies whereas others are partnerships of support organisations; Centres for Voluntary Service (CVS's), Volunteer Centres (VCs) and Social Enterprise Networks (SENs). Some are geographic partnerships, especially in rural areas covering large geographies. The expression 'Third Sector Interface' is in effect a collective noun and all TSIs have their own local brand reflecting local diversity and history as independent third sector support organisations. A full list of the TSIs is available on the Voluntary Action Scotland [website](#). A Scottish Government grant supports a minimum set of "[common services](#)" which all TSIs work to.

Of particular note is the TSI role in "building the third sector relationship with community planning". This role has led to effective bridge building by the TSI between the wider third and statutory sectors². The role is supported by locally adapted arrangements developed by TSIs to engage and involve the full range of the third sector in the area to inform their contribution to community planning. These can be a mix of geographic and thematic forums designed around local needs. These arrangements provide a strong basis for further development to support the engagement and involvement requirements of strategic commissioning.

[Voluntary Action Scotland](#) (VAS), the network of TSIs gathers and develops [case studies](#) that illustrate the different roles and annually produces an 'Impact Report' across the 32 TSIs.

¹<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Policy/Adult-Health-SocialCare-Integration/Implementation/ImplementationGuidance/SCPlans>

²<http://www.vascotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSI-Impact-Report-2013-14.pdf>

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3. The Act

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014³ places a statutory responsibility upon Health Boards, local authorities and Integration Authorities to actively involve the third sector in the planning and design of integrated health and social care services. Third sector providers of commissioned services are already embedded in the 'Do' part of the strategic commissioning process cycle. However, the third sector is large and diverse and ranges from service providers to communities of interest or place, volunteer led organisations, service user focussed groups, social enterprises and others. Many of these will have relatively untapped knowledge and expertise that could help inform strategic commissioning plans. Evidence from the Reshaping Care for Older People programme (RCOP)⁴ has shown how innovative responses from the third sector have been developed. These have built upon existing assets and provide services which though diverse are better connected via an expanded capacity within the TSI. The same ambitions but for the whole adult population and on a more sustainable basis, are expected of Integrated Authorities.

Many areas will have arrangements in place to achieve this, built with the assistance of the local Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs). Health Boards, local authorities and Integration Authorities will wish to consider how the TSIs are resourced in each partnership area to **support, promote, develop and advocate** the role of the third sector in the strategic commissioning and working arrangements of integrated partnerships. The advice note establishes questions to inform strategic commissioning arrangements.

4. The Role of the Third Sector Interface

Third Sector Interfaces should act as the conduit for the third sector in relation to the responsibilities of Health Boards, local authorities and Integration Authorities set out in the Act. The TSI's role is not to represent every concern in the third sector. The TSI, therefore, is well placed to act as the conduit for the third sector on the IJB and the strategic planning group but other than this it should support expertise to come to different tables from within the third sector itself. The TSI can co-ordinate this activity and ensure diverse voices are heard. IJBs should expect to see robust processes and protocols for information sharing, engagement and influencing on behalf of the sector.

³ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/9/pdfs/asp_20140009_en.pdf

⁴ http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2014/02/how-it-shaping-up-insight-1-engaging-with-reshaping-care/#.VOtcHC5wu_U

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Third Sector Interfaces as a key partner will be able to assist Integration Authorities with:

- Joining up and activating diverse parts of the third sector and volunteers to support health and social care outcomes;
- Development of a strong third sector engagement strategy to support strategic planning and joint commissioning;
- Advocating the interests and conveying the intelligence of third sector at the Strategic joint board level;
- Mapping more deeply and connecting third sector organisations able to contribute to health and social care policy development or with valuable intelligence to add; and
- Supporting the exploration of the development of the third sector role in enhancing prevention, self-management and co-production.

5. The Third Sector Interface

The TSI exists to **support, promote, develop** and **advocate the interests** and role of the third sector locally. The experience and ability of the TSI's in these roles makes them ideally placed, to support the guidance at all stages of the strategic commissioning cycle. In this way the TSI can assist Integration Authorities in answering the following questions;

1. Will your approach to strategic planning enable a balanced investment in prevention and crisis, within the financial constraints on the system?	The tacit knowledge and connections of the TSIs can be invested in to support a deeper mapping of the potential assets of the third sector locally which can be enhanced and co-ordinated to support a balanced investment, especially the potential for growing the preventative assets of the third sector.
2. Will your approach to strategic planning enable you to consider best value for the public purse from a holistic and long term perspective?	To fulfil their core functions TSIs are required to constantly 'horizon scan' and consider the holistic impact of strategy. RCOP has already evidenced that the resultant skills and capacities, incumbent in TSI managers support the wider partnerships to consider investments differently.

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<p>3. Does your approach to strategic planning enable a whole system approach, in the context of the whole system being a person's life rather than a service area?</p>	<p>The diversity of the third sector supports all aspects of people's lives. The comprehensive role of the TSI can therefore bring a generalist perspective and 'connect-in' perspectives from across the sector to assist a whole system approach.</p>
<p>4. Does your approach to strategic planning facilitate the implementation of the wider personalisation agenda including self-management, SDS and person-centred-ness and capitalise on the current knowledge locally?</p>	<p>The TSI can map and "connect-in" the expertise of all the third sector organisations operating locally with expert knowledge and experience of self-management, SDS and person centred approaches. The TSIs are also connected to national intermediaries with specific expertise.</p>
<p>5. Does your approach to strategic planning capitalise on the knowledge that has been gained through other major service redesign processes such as the implementation of 'The Same As You?', the Mental Health Strategy and Reshaping Care for Older People?</p>	<p>The TSIs have experience of supporting the third sector and statutory sector to implement a number of strategies, RCOP in particular. This will be of particular value in ensuring effective third sector involvement in the strategic commissioning cycle.</p>
<p>6. Does your approach to strategic planning ensure that services are designed to cultivate assets; empower individuals and communities; and enable self-management?</p>	<p>As well as being well versed in the strategies and techniques that best support this, the development role of a TSI makes a direct contribution to their achievement. TSI support both catalyses action (by supporting groups to translate good ideas into concrete actions) and supports activity to scale up. Their volunteering development also makes a direct contribution at the individual level.</p>

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<p>7. Does your approach to strategic planning ensure that service planning takes into account the natural capacity around individuals and in communities as a starting point and seeks to deliver services that fill the gaps rather than disable this capacity?</p>	<p>As a result of their ongoing engagement TSIs have long standing relationships with communities and organisations. They consequently carry a deep knowledge and understanding of the local context which is often maintained in real time. This means they can provide timely intelligence about what is happening in communities, the robustness of current assets and their development. This intelligence will be critical in both identifying the gaps and designing the service solutions.</p> <p>Third Sector Interfaces are also well versed in the strategies and techniques that best support this tacit intelligence to be more formally explored and captured (such as 'appreciative inquiry and asset mapping).</p>
<p>8. Does the information you have to inform strategic planning include information about the aspirations of 'hard to reach' individuals and communities?</p>	<p>By existing to support the totality of the third sector locally the TSI will have knowledge of third sector groups trusted by 'hard to reach' voices, connecting these voices into the strategic planning process.</p>
<p>9. Does the information you have to inform strategic planning include information about what has and could support 'hard to reach' individuals and communities to engage with services before they reach crisis?</p>	<p>By connecting in harder to reach voices via the sector this can help prevent crisis by identifying third sector led opportunities for anticipatory care and early intervention.</p>
<p>10. Does the information you have to inform strategic planning include soft information and intelligence about the communities you seek to serve?</p>	<p>The TSIs are coterminous with local authority boundaries and engage and support the third sector at all levels across the geography. Ongoing relationships and dialogue with the diversity of the sector locally can provide soft intelligence to inform strategic planning and near real-time information on impact on individuals, communities and organisations.</p>

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<p>11. Does the information you have to inform strategic planning include information about how increasing the capacity of communities through the third sector may reduce demand on acute services?</p>	<p>Third Sector Interfaces have supported third sector organisations to consider and evidence their impact both at an individual project and organisational level. Although this includes formal monitoring and evaluation support in some cases, it can also be targeted at supporting organisations to consider what systems evidence is available. For example in the RCOP context, several TSIs supported organisations to consider how the health data routinely captured by ISD (such as SPARRA scores) could be used to evidence the impact of interventions on flow through within the system or on system usage.</p>
<p>12. Do your planning groups include people who have detailed and / or specific knowledge about all of these areas?</p>	<p>Involvement of the TSI within the Partnership provides the ability to exchange information and intelligence based on their connection with local and national expertise. Given the diversity of the agenda this will be critical for Partnerships who cannot contain all interests and knowledge simultaneously. Furthermore the TSIs facilitative role connecting the sector to the CPPs provides a model that can be built on to enable the effective connection of third sector expertise to Partnerships.</p>
<p>13. If not, who could you invite who may address this deficit?</p>	
<p>14. Does your investment strategy include investment in the third sector's capacity to contribute, and if so is this sufficient for what you need them to do?</p>	<p>The TSI can play a critical role in identifying effective ways to develop third sector capacity and build the collaborations to provide that capacity. However the TSI itself needs investment to fulfil these roles and effectively 'unlock' the potential of the third sector.</p>

6. Changes in the Third Sector Interface role

The Scottish Government has provided transitional funding and is providing further investment via the integrated care fund to partnerships as an enabling resources across the range of partners as a means to drive change. **This includes the TSIs as enablers of the third sector role in the Act.** This enabling ability in TSIs was illustrated by a valuable ‘brokerage’ role (e.g. in RCOP) when investment was provided. This role effectively encapsulates a number of the answers to the questions above and centres around three aspects that are essential to making the most of the capacity and knowledge of the third sector in strategic commissioning;

1. In engaging the third sector’s views and intelligence and conveying knowledge of its ability and potential to contribute (including the third sector beyond that which may be traditionally associated with health and social care) to plans and delivery models.
2. Building connections and supporting relationship building that leads to innovative solutions within and across sectors (such as links between preventative and crisis services that reduce repeated interventions).
3. Harnessing that potential by building the collaboration and capacity to help fulfil the ambitions for health and social care.

This role is regarded by the Scottish Government as essential to the aims of strategic commissioning and thus requires that the **TSI is identified as the lead in supporting, promoting, developing and advocating for the third sector in health and social care integration.**

7. Dealing with potential challenges in the Third Sector Interface role

- **What scope of the third sector should the TSI be trying to reach with regards to health and social care integration?**

The TSI should be trying to reach as wide a possible range of the third sector but may dependent on geography and circumstances seek to map and segment the sector as required. For example some TSIs are beginning to host a providers forum to make sure care and support providers are informed, connected and able to articulate views. This can also be a helpful mechanism for TSIs to work with, and bring together, local organisations and national (for example condition-specific) organisations that have particular expertise and which may provide support locally.

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- **What if others don't recognise the TSI or alternative bodies claim the third sector engagement and advocacy role?**

The TSI is the Scottish Government's recognised local supporter and connector of the third sector and should be regarded as such by IJBs. By supporting their TSI to undertake this job carefully and thoroughly IJBs can ensure that robust information sharing, engagement and support is provided.

- **The TSI is already funded by the Scottish Government. Why might more funding be necessary?**

The Scottish Government funds the core capacity of TSIs. This is not limitless and the current core funding does not include new activity required under the Act. Support to engage and develop the role of the third sector can reduce costs by building prevention and community assets. The TSIs should be part of the means to realising this potential in the third sector.

- **The Third Sector isn't the same as a service user voice though.**

Correct. The TSI or indeed other third sector organisations engaging with topic specific forums is not a low cost substitute for effective engagement of people who use services or unpaid carers. IJBs separately will require to ensure that those voices are specifically engaged. Often the third sector will be an effective vehicle to achieving this and the TSI can prove effective at connecting partners to groups representing people who use services, including disabled people's organisations and national condition-specific groups.

- **Won't TSIs or other third sector organisations just articulate their own interests?**

That's why robust engagement and communication protocols should be in place. TSIs and many other third sector partners have experience of collaborative engagement and influencing. Adequately resourced processes with clear expectations on those attending boards, commissioning groups and other forums should help ensure the common interest of the third sector is conveyed and the value of the diversity of the sector can be brought to bear positively.

- TSIs can't possibly understand all aspects of strategic commissioning or provision

No but they are very experienced now in statutory sector relationship building and engagement entailing change funds, community planning and much other public service change.

- **Shouldn't the Integrated partnership's priority be resourcing for the wider sector?**

Resourcing to unlock the potential of the third sector should not stop at the door of the TSI. The sector is integral to the Scottish Government's ambitions for health and social care and effective engagement and advocacy will show how the sector can be resourced to help transform outcomes.

8. Resourcing the role of TSI's in Health and Social Care Integration

In order to enable TSI's to play the key partnership role described in this supplementary advice note, we would encourage early local discussions between Integrated Authorities and local Third Sector Interfaces, where a shared view can be taken of any additional capacity required by the TSI, and what the Integrated Authority can draw on within its resources to support the development of that capacity.



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This publication is available at www.scotland.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-78544-291-9 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, April 2015

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS43518 (04/15)