**What’s Next? A third sector approach to the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund**

**Meeting notes - Thursday 30th September 2021**

Facilitated by Network for Europe (NfE) and Selnet

Attended by 58 Leaders and practitioners working in the VCSE sector

**Background:**

This was the second meeting held on behalf of VCSE leaders in the North West and beyond looking to find out more about future resources to replace the current European Structural Investment Funds that for the past seven years have enabled so many organisations to support inclusion, skills development, and progression for people in our communities with complex needs.

**Meeting Chair:** Ann Marie Wrigley (NfE), Ann Marie who opened the meeting with Introductions and information.

**Initial updates from:** Andy Churchill, Network for Europe on: Community Renewal Fund, Community Ownership Fund, UK-Shared Prosperity Fund and Local actions and the Third Sector

The meeting then welcomed 3 key speakers who gave presentations on priority themes:

* **Poverty** – Sue Ormiston, EU Programme Manager National Lottery Community Fund
* **Health** – Adrian Leather, CEO Active Lancashire
* **Climate Change** – Chris Coates, Director & Site Manager of Halton Mill

The presentations were followed by a Q&A panel

**Action:** Send ESSI Committee paper to attendees

**Action:** Due North link:

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/1151/due-north-report-of-the-inquiry-on-health-equity-in-the-north-final1.pdf>

CLES link: [CLES - The national organisation for local economies](https://cles.org.uk/)

**Group breakout session:** To facilitate involvement and discussion the meeting broke into six groups to discuss sector influence in more detail – below details the questions asked of the groups, the response and summary for each group:

**Q1 What are we missing?**

The groups made numerous recommendations to for the new fund:

* *a move from some of the restrictions ESF imposes*
* *the new fund to allow practitioners to work with people for whom we cannot always evidence economic inactivity e.g., hidden NEET young people*
* *Credit ‘stabilization’ outcomes*
* *support to continue after the client starts work*
* *address social exclusion e.g., by linking them up with other services, support networks or community activity*
* *Ensure mental health issues are addressed as a valid activity and figures in ‘stabilisation’ outcomes*
* *Important that support for individuals recognises their own particular circumstances, neuro diversity and (often hidden) needs but is also sensitive to the vagaries of place. This needs to be based on effective dialogue with communities*
* *rename ‘Soft’ outcomes since the outcomes we want to credit are never easy or soft*
* *enable capacity and growth for VCSE, especially for the smaller orgs with greater grassroots impact*
* *Fills the digital skills gaps which have become evident due to covid-19 lockdowns*
* *Equality – must run through all strands*
* *Consider marginalised groups and how to meet their needs, e.g., only 6% of people with a diagnosed neurological condition are in employment*
* *Worthwhile involvement/activity is more than 'work'. Build in flexibility within the fund conditions to provide community-based activities to improve wellbeing, build confidence and self-esteem.*
* *recognise ‘distance travelled’ is a significant and measurable outcome and in reality, some people will never get involved in mainstream (work) activities*
* *Health covers a huge span, mental, physical, emotional, sexual etc. What works well is when volunteers and professionals work together as a 'team', community champions model*
* *Address safeguarding across all strands e.g., Violence particularly against women and young females, sexual health*
* *It’s concerning that decisions are not being announced and that approval is being needed. It all feels very political*
* *CRF – Some of the priority areas made sense and some didn’t, don’t understand how they have been chosen*

**What do we need to do next?**

* *These groups are useful if we had something to consult on. We will continue to talk to the communities we work with. Now that furlough is coming to an end and with the changes to UC, there are going to be more challenges to face*
* *Be savvy about making connections - national and local so as to improve our ability*

*to work together and across different disciplines.*

* *Ensure that the message from our sector is clear and strong - that we are united*
* *Access to some form of health programme for employees of small organisations/businesses who can’t afford to buy in to more expensive services. Could be delivered across Lancs.*

NB: Noted in the chat - Question for Adrian

‘Simple life changes – I would challenge that smoking, inactivity and diet are simple changes to make. Even people who are not struggling financially struggle to address inactivity and diet’

[session end]

**Next meeting to be confirmed** – pending further details/information from Government and possibly the spending review