

ECHF Forum Meeting

Date 07/12/2021

Attendees: Stephanie-Anne Harris (ECHF), Maruska Greenwood (LGBT), Susan Paxton (SCDC), Brenda Black (ECF), Charlie Cumming (ELGT), Brock Lueck (OPF), Alison McGhee (Health In Mind), Suzanne Lowden( H & SC P’Ship), Marion Findlay (Volunteer Edinburgh), Helena Richards (CarrGomm), Biddy Kelly (Fresh Start), John Halliday (Community Renewal), Fiona Partington (THA) , Anne Munro( Pilmeny), Rossi Craig(THA), Ruth McLellan ( Care4Carers),Dawn Anderson (PCHP) and Effie Marathia( University of Dundee)

Apologies: Magda Czarnecka (Feniks), Suzanne Campbell (The Junction)

**Welcome and Introductions - Cat**

Cat welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Effie Marathia(University of Dundee)**

Effie presented to the Forum on her work on Quitting Smoking. She reported that quitting smoking has largely dropped of local agenda, even although a relatively high percentage of the older generation are still smoking. Copies of Effie’s poster materials are attached to these notes. Effie is looking for volunteers to join her research programme and anyone interested should contact Effie Directly.

1. **The Pact**

S-AH gave a summary and update on the Pact.

What is the Pact? it’s a ‘deal’ between the different sectors and communities/individuals aiming to work together to give everyone more ‘better days. It will encourage system change, and focus on prevention, early intervention, and health inequalities. Community Commissioning and Community mobilisation are new ways of working within the Pact.

What resources are available? There is £1m in the current financial year for transformational projects, now looking at winter pressures and potentially any other projects that are identified that meet the transformation agenda. There has been work done to identify and collate exactly how much £ there is in the system to support all of this, but this has not yet been shared, but it does include the EIJB grants £ of £4m per year. There appears to be a drive towards community commissioning and maybe a move away from having a ‘grants’ programme. The new mental health monies are being community commissioned, led by EVOC.

S-A H shared with the members questions/issues on the Pact and its progress so far that she had received from a Forum member .Those attending the meeting were split into break out rooms to debate and discuss the questions and issues raised which are detailed below:

* What is the PACT trying to achieve?  Where is the evidence of specific problems to support the PACT being the solution.
* What means is the PACT working with?  For example, is there new money to support it? is it going to include the current EIJB grants money?
* Is the current EIJB grants system not working?
* Do we think starting from scratch is the best way forward, or can the current system be improved?

The biggest issue is there isn’t enough funding for the third sector to provide services, we already represent our communities well we just need more support to do it.  The current grant system is young relatively speaking and is a work in progress utilising good service design by being developed on the back of consultations and feedback with its users and going through various design iterations to try to achieve the most functional outcome.  Other members may disagree and of course that’s worth a discussion, but for some the current system works.   The recent flexibility offered by the EIJB has empowered us to be able to vary our offerings in response to need as it arises, benefiting the local people and motivating the staff.

There have only been a few issues with the EIJB grants systems:

* Historically it didn’t feel flexible, you were having to report on outcomes that you had set 2 or 3 years earlier that were perhaps no longer relevant – we’ve had flexibility since covid, and it’s been great!
* Some people are tired of the SIAQs – these have not been obligatory since covid and were never obligatory for every service offering
* There’s a fear that asking for more money might result in no money
* Some people found the application/reporting process cumbersome – this has been streamlined
* There was a lot of anger around the organisations that were unsuccessful - the grant system is massively oversubscribed, so this is inevitable as long as the money available doesn’t increase.

 Could the EIJB offer:

* Ongoing flexibility
* Something to reduce peoples fear of losing the grant entirely, maybe a 2-tier application so you can ask for more money to provide additional services, so £xxx to provide abcde, or £xx to provide abc

How does the rest of the forum feel:

* In terms of the PACT:
	+ Do they feel they understand the purpose of the PACT, and the steps it will put in place to reach its objectives?
	+ If not, what needs clarified?
* In terms of the third sector supporting statutory services:
	+ What isn’t working currently?
	+ What would improve things?
* In terms of the EIJB grants system:
	+ What changes would you like to see to improve it?

Feedback from the breakout rooms included:

**Group 1**

We found there was very little clarity at all - every meeting was different. Lots of disconnects. Need clarity of timelines. Current grant process largely works. There will be too much politics involved when being judged by our peers - divide and rule. This is very stressful (mental health fund). Yes, add in to ours that the mental health system sets us up against each other if we are judging each other?
My notes:
Everyone in my breakout room said that they don’t understand the PACT and it all needs clarified.
‘The whole thing is confusing’, ‘it seems to be shifting sideways’
The meetings are ‘long winded and chatty’ with no clear structure or progress being made
At one of the meetings, it was stated that Thrive is a success.  Is it?  Where’s the evidence?
The 3 conversations discussions were exciting, but they seem to be ‘trickling’ down to the 3rd sector.
‘The PACT is all smoke and mirrors’ and has ‘lost focus’
What we need Is transparency - How much money? Who to go to? Timelines
‘The PACT is a complete waste of time’
Discussion around the mental health fund being used as a pilot/template for community commissioning of the PACT money:
‘It is not collaborative, and it is not coproduction’
They say it isn’t a grant application, it’s a different process, where you note your interest, but it is a form you fill in just like a grant application
Some concerns around EVOC controlling the money
A member stated that ‘the mental health fund was for only up to £10k, so why has EVOC been given £90k?’
If the grant panel is made up of people from within the 3rd sector, we’re afraid of how this will be affected by politics within the 3rd sector, it may turn into a popularity contest.
There is a wide divide between statutory sector and third sector, ‘EVOC is making it worse’, ‘another tier of bureaucracy’. Concerns that EVOC are turning into the decision makers.
Feedback on the current EIJB Grant system:
There are communication issues with the EIJB, specific examples given were:
Would like better feedback if your grant application is not successful, one of our breakout members stated struggling for months to get feedback, but now they have it that is what they are working on improving. There’s an understanding that the grant system is oversubscribed so people are going to lose, that’s accepted, but it would be useful if feedback was easier to get, perhaps happens by default without prompting, and follow up questions accepted, with a specific point of contact.
One of our breakout members is the only member of staff in their org, they said they had a terrible time communicating with EIJB, that EVOC were acting as ‘gatekeepers’ and they just weren’t getting the support they need. They also stated that they don’t like the SIAQs.
Wider discussion:
Statutory sector wasting money – an example was given of a GP practice being given £400k for provision of a project using art to improve wellbeing
There’s a disconnect between bureaucratic needs and frontline needs
Volume and complexity has changed but winter pressures haven’t
There’s not enough money in the 3rd sector to provide what is needed
3rd sector is already flexible, responsive, efficient

A general consensus that the current system is preferred but it could use some tweaking.

**Group 2 :**

Understand the Pact – yes in principle, but not entirely confident as it not an equal relationship (power issues between those who hold the money and those who want it)

Power imbalance

Inaccurate write up of events

Focus on new and shiny is frustrating – having access to “more good days” would be access to our core services, not necessarily new and shiny stuff

Identified as a messy process – our sector is used and comfortable with messiness – we do it all the time, working with short term funding, managing staff, supporting and retaining staff against the odds – if this isn’t messiness what is??  Statutory sector never has to deal with this – staff have permanent contracts   until they retire!!!

**Question 2**

Concern that focus is on Mental health –what about the wider health inequalities?

Not sure where some of the identified achievements have come from

Real concerns about how much the process has cost – has anyone worked out the hourly rate and number of hours of folk who have attended so many navel gazing events?

Concerned that this process has deflected from delivering core work and the core EIJB grants process

Real concern that experienced managers in orgs are being exhausted and potentially driven out by this additional stress of ongoing meetings on top of everything else

**Question 3**

Real concern that the EIJB grant process is being forgotten about.  It was a good transparent new process 3 years ago. Really concerned it will be a casualty of this process

The big issues of funding – regardless of how it is framed, is that it involves competition – with winners and losers.  This has always been the case.  This has always been the messiness of life as a voluntary sector manager.  Please put a halt to the blue sky thinking which raises unrealistic expectations which we know will never be fundable (we always are in a competitive situation), detracts us from the day job – small nimble organisations have ironically been most able to deliver (in contrast to a lot of big statutory orgs with layers of bureaucracy and risk adversity).  Please ensure that the EIJB process is able to proceed to test out how

**Group 3:**

The Pact is supped to be a deal that brokers a partnership between statutory organisations, 3rd sector and communities. How much money are we talking about? £4m from EIJB grants which is an innovative structure of co commissioning.

Community mobilisation? What does this mean in practice?

Do we understand the Pact?

In terms of 3rd sector, what is working, and what is not working in terms of EIJB grant system?

The 3rd sector has been at the forefront of delivery. The organisations identified not helpful.

Delayed discharge is how do we as a sector address it collectively.

Where are the lines between statutory responsibilities?

How do we as communities/individuals take accountability.

People do have ideas- ECF delivering to local communities/organisations/local connections.

Is all the money going into one pot?

We ned reassurance that the main £4m is secure.

Workshops not ideal for generating the ideas. We support each other, learn from each other.

Lots of organisations struggle to engage with the process.

What is the plan?

**Group 4:**

EIJB grants process: what worked:

-stability

Could be more. Flexible with targets

Could have a second stream of funding which is for transformational change

Need core

The investment that 3rd Sector are already fronting up in trying to build our own community partnerships

How do we showcase and appreciate what the 3rd sector brings to the table?

How do we define ‘community mobilisation and community commissioning?

Things are quite confused

Need to develop clear work streams

So can be clearer

Not clear on how much money

What is the additionality?

Core funding for services needs to be protected

Once protected then we can do transformational change

Valuing to improving communities would be clearer

Value what we have, then improve it

Need to hold onto the ability to be agile

Funders have to be flexible

General discussion and points made in the Forum included:

If there is a focus solely on community commissioning, the grants may get lost

3rd sector infrastructure is key for health and social care

There has been little progress as a result of the Pact meetings, event after event, then what?

The £4m is all about sustaining the infrastructure

A lot of confusion; work streams might help

Core funded is needed

We need to value and improve our communities; value what we already have

The EIJB brings stability

We need to showcase what we do in the sector

The Pact is so vague, it doesn’t focus on service redesign

We are flexible and responsive; we don’t really need whole scale change at this time; the last 18 months has shown that we can deliver and respond

Is there a power imbalance?

The Pact is about accessing the core provision of the 3rd sector

Core funding can’t be separated from transformation, but you need a strong core before you can transform.

Danger this all becomes about core v projects

3.**Joint work with CHEX- an update**

There were 3 proformas submitted by Forum members which will be circulated to the whole Forum in due course. They were very high level so there is some work to be done in turning these into collaborative ideas/viable propositions that we could. Deliver under the Pact. It was agreed to reconvene to look at the proformas. Date to be identified that we could work through the areas/ideas that we all need to collaborate on and how we transform on a number of topics, such as carers, or food etc. that.

**4.Notes**

The notes of the previous meeting of 2/11/2021 were approved.

**5.Date of next meetings**

December 14th The Pact at 9.30

Next Forum meeting – 1/2/2022, at 9.30am