

Appendix 4 - Focus Groups SWOT Analysis

Helensburgh – 25 attendees

Tarbert – 14 attendees

Dunoon – 16 attendees

Oban – 19 attendees

“Serving the people in our communities as best we can!”

“The 3rd sector is lifesaving”

Strengths	Weakness
<p><u>Funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An example of a good funding ‘platform’ is the Community Mental Health fund. • The TSI fund management platform should be copied; it shows the stage you are on and is easy <p><u>Lobbying</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lobbying that ABTSI does is appreciated <p><u>Sector</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 3rd sector is essential for society to function, and supplies some of the emergency services! • Resilient • Support in local communities • The 3rd sector is front facing and knows the impact it has on its communities first hand. (The statutory sector doesn’t have that knowledge) <p><u>Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABTSI training is very good • 	<p><u>ABTSI</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action from previous engagements appears to be limited. We need to move forward and make / communicate positive changes • The TSI should have more of an overview on areas that affect everyone (not just focusing on health & wellbeing) eg community wealth building, environment, direction of government policy • There sometimes seems to be a duplication of ABC and ABTSI <p><u>Sector</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 3rd sector is not valued – it is essential for society to function, and supplies some of the emergency services! <p><u>Connection with Statutory Sector</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a chasm between the 3rd sector and the statutory sector, ABTSI should bring them together more both strategically and operationally. The TSI should formally lobby on this as the 3rd sector is taking on more statutory work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address inequality (funding and referrals) ○ Social prescribing is increasing in one direction (NHS refers to 3rd sector but not vice versa) with no extra funding. ○ Challenges of complex referrals • Relationships with Council is vital for 3rd sector organisations but it is still difficult to make connections • Policy doesn’t always filter through to 3rd sector; it gets stuck at statutory • 3rd sector is asked for more data but is not privy to statutory information. Improve collaboration <p><u>Data collection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent data collections; the info that is given to policy makers isn’t accurate, therefore organisations don’t get their share of funding • Platforms are difficult to use • Quantifying outcomes is challenging <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People don’t know what ABTSI offers in terms of programmes, materials etc. • Some organisations don’t know they can access ABTSI eg parent councils, local NCT, local Scouts • Signposting is limited • Poor comms between statutory service and third sector <p><u>Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd sector meetings should be reinstated face to face (with the ability to join online too). <p><u>Volunteers</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to find volunteers, they often don't know where to go • Difficult getting trustees with the right skills, recruiting them and training <p>Organisational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of capacity in the sector • Tendency to work in silos and end up competing rather than co-operating <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Helensburgh area feels there is a disconnect between them and funding (with a focus on the islands) – can this be addressed?
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>ABTSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a portal that organisations drop their monthly reports into (use AI to analyse). • Share case studies – collate the “bigger picture” of how organisations work together. • Share outcomes of this project and the outcomes / actions • Influence priorities locally • TSI meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share who is coming to them – improve comms around them ○ Have keynote listeners (Takki?) • ABTSI platform is not user friendly. Develop an ABTSI app • Flip the narrative around the 3rd sector, it is essential for our society to function and yet is not valued / funded • Provide organisations with support around business planning • Personalised/individualised visits from TSI as “each service provider is so different” • Develop knowledge exchange events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cross regional ○ Trustee education • Lobby for a designated councillor to advocate for the 3rd sector • A&B 3rd sector is unique eg geography and islands). Change the narrative with ABC <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to work together more and be strategic in funding applications. More connections should be built between organisations through face-to-face meetings, to develop trust / collaboration and help decide who is going for what funding. • Learn from positive funding experiences • Facilitate partnerships when going for funding, be proactive & target appropriate funding for different organisations • ABTSI should provide overviews and disseminate government funding schemes • Fight for core and unrestricted funding • Tell funders / policy makers the story about why short term funding is wasteful • Areas of A&B misses out on renewable energy funds, and Faslane community benefit is minimal. An All Argyll Fund might help address this <p>All Argyll Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to show that organisations have got a voice in this • Flip the narrative; we don't want handouts we want control! “We provide essential services and society would collapse without us.” • Invite larger funders into the region • Reflect the network 	<p>Threats</p> <p>3rd sector landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities don't understand 3rd sector – they often assume services are carried out by statutory bodies eg councils • Succession planning is often ignored by organisations <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is chasing the same pots of funding <p>Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working can be difficult in the current landscape. Identifying partners in the area can be nuanced. <p>Bureaucracy & compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging, as for example, complex referrals take much more time to deal with. • Too much admin that smaller organisation struggle to undertake

- Show the impact of 3rd sector organisation closures on communities
- Include the whole of the sector eg faith groups, RNLI etc

Resources

- Provide bank of resources eg volunteers, materials (eg projectors)
- Connect with the sector more eg Community Councils' make decisions on where funding is spent but they may not be fully informed
- Set up a database of the people in A&B being served by 3rd sector (explain the GDPR compliance and how the database would work)
 - Track service users' journeys
 - Strengthen collaboration / compete less
 - Early adopters should be identified to show how it would work
 - Boards would need to be communicated with and convinced
 - Develop a culture of trust
 - Look at D&G's 'strategic alliance'.

Meetings

- More meetings should be face to face and geographically spread across the areas. This might also help recruit volunteers
- TSSA's should visit all areas
- Use Community Planning meetings as a vehicle for getting things done across the sector. But it needs authority and actions need to be taken

Communications

- Use accessible language
- Clarify the TSI's scope and remit – raise awareness of what it offers
- Celebrate our strengths and connections
- Streamline communication – make it more effective
- Tell our collective story, we are all interconnected
- Improve comms between statutory and 3rd sector
- Recognise 3rd sector knowledge, it is not as respected as being valuable

Statutory Sector

- ABTSI could broker relationship / bridge the gap between policy makers and 3rd sector
 - Facilitate, make introductions, join dots
 - Help place based connection
 - In person relationship building (what does everyone do and how can we connect?)

Evaluation

- ABTSI develop an evaluation tool. Show how the sector could collaborate. Share what everyone does
- Collect impact reporting and how the 3rd sector saves money across communities
- Carry out an annual survey? This would enable ABTSI to tell a story, and reference the 3rd sector and how it helps society function

Volunteers

- ABTSI help signpost and connect volunteers to organisations. Hold open days to attract volunteers
- Have access to link person to help with finding volunteers

Training

- Training needs should be scoped out – identify what is needed.

- Provide more generic training that lots of the sector needs eg emergency first aid, protection of vulnerable groups
- Avoid duplication with SCVO, DTAS etc
- Collaborate with other organisations eg Business Gateway to provide training etc
- Sell ABTSI training more (recognised as being v good)

Partnerships

- Be aware of our differences: one size doesn't fit all and there are conflicts of need

Core Themes from the SWOT

The third sector is essential, but undervalued

"Supplies emergency services"

"Society would collapse without us"

- Not valued or funded proportionately
- Communities assume services are statutory
- Always asked for more data but not appreciated

The sector knows it's worth, but it isn't fully recognised in the wider context. This is partly related to communication but also shows the sector doesn't feel it has power or influence at a higher level.

There is a disconnect with the statutory sector

- "Chasm" between statutory and third sector
- Referrals one-directional (e.g. from NHS to 3rd sector)
- No extra funding attached
- Poor policy flow-down
- Data asymmetry
- Relationships difficult to navigate

How can the TSI bridge the divide between the third and statutory groups

A need to improve communications and visibility

- People don't know what ABTSI offers
- Organisations don't know they can access support
- Signposting limited
- Poor statutory-third sector comms
- TSI needs to clarify its remit
- Need accessible language
- Need to tell the collective story

There's a sense that both ABTSI and third sector organisations are doing good work but it's not widely understood or seen.

Data, evidence & impact

Recurring comments:

- Inconsistent data collection
- Platforms hard to use for feedback and reporting
- Outcomes hard to quantify
- Policy makers don't get accurate picture
- Need annual survey
- Need evaluation tools
- Need to show savings to public sector
- Track service user journeys

The sector feels it has some powerful data if it was presented as a collective picture. The intelligence and

thorough reporting would be a strategic asset.

Capacity, Volunteers & Trustees Are Under Strain

- Hard to find volunteers
- Hard to recruit skilled trustees
- Lack of organisational capacity
- Too much compliance/admin
- Succession planning ignored

It's a fragile system that needs to build resilience.

Funding is competitive, short-term & unequal

- Everyone chasing same pots
- Short term funding wasteful
- Core funding lacking
- Desire for All Argyll Fund
- Need strategic funding collaboration

The sector wants to move from survival mode to sustainable income generation and/or long term funding models

The geography of Argyll & Bute is a unique challenge

- Islands & rurality + towns
- Face-to-face needed
- Geographic spread
- Place-based connection
- One size doesn't fit all

There's a strong sense that national models don't always fit. ABTSI TSSA's give place-based support which is appreciated.

Relating this to ABTSI Strategy Development

The findings from the focus groups and wider data analysis give ABTSI an indication of where TSOs would like their support.

While the third sector in Argyll & Bute is widely recognised as essential, resilient, embedded in the local community and often delivering services that statutory bodies can no longer provide, it feels it is undervalued and increasingly overstretched.

The analysis suggests that ABTSI must continue to evolve beyond a traditional support role to become a stronger strategic connector, advocate and intelligence hub for the sector. The strategy needs to address practical support gaps, but also improve relationships with statutory partners, strengthen the third sector's identity and create a sense of shared pride across the third sector.

System Leadership & Advocacy

Feedback highlighted ongoing power imbalances between the third sector and statutory organisations.

Goal: Position the third sector as an equal strategic partner in Argyll & Bute.

Focus areas:

- Formal lobbying on funding inequality & referrals
- Advocate for core/unrestricted funding
- Designated councillor champion
- Strengthen the role and influence of Community Planning
- Broker stronger relationships between statutory bodies and TSOs

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Networking, Collaboration & Collective Strength

Feedback from TSO was for more networking events with knowledge sharing, with TSOs cooperating with each other rather than competing.

Goal: Reduce silos and build trust across the sector and with statutory partners.

Focus areas:

- Face-to-face meetings across the area
- Knowledge exchange events
- Support for funding collaboration
- Development of an All Argyll Fund
- Partnership brokering

Evidence, Insight & Shared Intelligence

TSO were keen on a shared system of data collection to help evidence their impact and to support work around funding applications.

Goal: Build a strong, shared evidence base that demonstrates impact and economic value.

Focus areas:

- Sector-wide reporting portal
- Annual sector survey
- Evaluation toolkit
- Case study library
- Impact & cost-saving analysis
- Data-sharing improvements with statutory partners

Capacity, Skills & Organisational Resilience

TSO's regularly mentioned volunteer shortages, trustee skills gaps and the general burden of admin tasks.

Goal: Strengthen the sustainability of third sector organisations.

Focus areas:

- Business planning support
- Core training (first aid, governance, PVG)
- Trustee recruitment & development
- Succession planning guidance
- Signposting volunteers
- Reduce duplication with SCVO/DTAS
- Personalised TSI engagement

Visibility, Communication & Narrative Change

Another general message from the TSO was they didn't think all groups were aware of the TSI's services and role. In addition, they felt the TSO could use a shared data system to communicate the TSO's impact more widely.

Goal: Ensure the third sector visible, understood and valued.

Focus areas:

- Clarify and communicate ABTSI remit
- Use accessible language
- Improve signposting
- Clearly communicate the purpose and outcomes of meetings
- Share project outcomes and success stories
- Communicate the sector's collective impact
- Improve communication between statutory bodies and TSOs