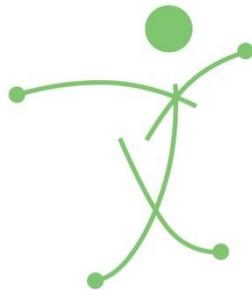


# Talwrn report on progress

April 2016

PEOPLE  
AND WORK UNIT



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# Talwrn: Core principles

- Building its social capital can develop a stronger Welsh voluntary sector that is more effective in meeting needs
- Working from the centre out: small actions can create powerful spheres of influence if there is a ripple effect e.g. if each member develops a local Talwrn
- The Welsh language is a key strength for Wales and its people
- Using strengths based practices builds capacity in people and communities
- Voluntary organisations need to define their own needs and find their own ways to meet those needs
- Measuring and demonstrating impact is core to good work
- Modelling and demonstrating effective practice is more powerful than talking about it
- Bring more money into Wales

## Introduction

With encouragement from the Rank Foundation a group of voluntary organisations in Wales met in May 2014 to look at how to develop the capacity and independence of the Welsh voluntary sector. Some of that group wanted to start working together to develop strengths both within their own work and more broadly in Wales. New people joined and others left and by early 2015 Talwrn was formed. 'Talwrn' (literally cockpit) was traditionally where bards and poets battled out ideas and words.

Talwrn is an alliance of twelve diverse voluntary sector organisations with their own individual purposes but which support disadvantaged people in Wales. They work together to develop knowledge and create ways of collaborating and co-producing work. Talwrn members challenge each other, provide support and advice, develop new projects, enable learning and, through sharing their learning, inform the voluntary sector as a whole.

Talwrn members believe that by optimising and building on its collective assets, the voluntary sector has the potential to become a strong, independent voice in Wales and a more effective catalyst for social change. Talwrn's focus is on building sustainable work; finding ways for communities and individuals to generate their own resources and income through a strengths based approach, and informing anti-poverty policy. Talwrn aims to build individual and community capacity by concentrating on three key themes:

- empowerment: how the Welsh voluntary sector can support and develop the strengths of individuals, families and communities
- enterprise: how to build self-sustaining social enterprises and promote personal and community enterprise
- voluntary sector effectiveness: building the capacity of voluntary organisations to meet needs.

Talwrn seeks to draw, and build, on evidence of what has worked effectively inside and outside Wales to embed effective models for building capacity within people, communities and the voluntary sector. The focus is on how the voluntary sector can support people to understand the issues they face, bridge gaps between them and the labour market, and ultimately take action to make changes to their lives and community as a whole.

Talwrn functions as a community of practice which also has an outward facing role around influencing policy and practice.

### **A community of practice**

Etienne Wenger summarizes Communities of Practice (CoP) as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. Community of practice members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information building relationships that enable them to learn from each other.

A community of practice is not merely a community of interest – members are practitioners and they develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing returning problems.

## Resources

May 2015 Talwrn was awarded £4950 from the Rank Foundation to cover its core costs and in September 2015 it was awarded a grant of £35,000 from Garfield Weston Foundation.

The key resource Talwrn has is its membership. Over time this has grown into a strong group that provides equal measures of challenge, support and stimulation.

Core members are:

Brian Thirsk – co-founder of Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyf. (Gwynedd);

Ffion Farnell - Cyfarwyddwr/Director Tir Coed (Ceredigion);

Jen O'Hara-Jakeway – Cyfarwyddwr/Director Powys Carers Service;

Simon James – Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive Interlink (Rhondda Cynon Taf CVS);

Alison Hill – Chief Officer Caia Parc Partnership (Wrexham);

Joanne Bartlett – Prosperous Communities Lead Officer, North Ebbw Fach Communities First (Blaenau Gwent);

Sarah Lloyd-Jones – Cyfarwyddwr/Director People and Work;

Elwyn James - – Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive Arts Factory (Rhondda Fach);

Sarah Stone – Executive Director for Wales, Samaritans Cymru (volunteers across Wales);

Chris Johnes - Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive Building Communities Trust (all Wales)

Mark Richardson – Cyfarwyddwr/ Director Social Impact Consulting. Fellow, Bangor Business School (All Wales)

Louisa Addiscott – Prosperous Communities Lead Officer Glyncoch Community Regeneration/ Communities First (Cynon Valley).

Others who have attended sessions have been Tom Barham, from Book of You – a dementia programme developed in Bangor University; Guy Evans, head of Care Society, a Ceredigion homelessness and employment support charity; Wendi Jones, head of services for Gisda, a homelessness support and social enterprise development organisation working in Gwynedd; Carl Cooper chief executive of Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO).

## **Activities**

### **Reflective discussion**

Since the beginning of 2015 Talwrn has met eight times. Meetings are in Llandinam in mid Wales and start with a round up of members' work since the last meeting, including developments, plans and challenges. These sessions provide critical friend support and allow for new cooperation and joint pieces of work to emerge. Following this a more structured session is run that might focus on peer review of a funding application, discussion with an invited speaker or a focus on a specific issue.

In January 2016 Talwrn met for a 24 hour residential to plan the coming year. Funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation meant that members could be more ambitious about the work. It was decided to structure a series of themed workshops led by members and open to anyone who wanted to attend. These workshops would explore key issues relevant to the Welsh voluntary sector and lead to the development of a short paper and blog around each subject that would be shared through a website and presentations. At the end of the year the papers will be collated into a single document.

### **Themed workshops**

Six themed workshops were identified to be run between March 2016 and January 2017:

- Evaluation - how do we approach self evaluation, outcomes mapping, and presenting work; including how we evaluate the impact of Talwrn on members

and the sector. March 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Mark Richardson

- Social/community enterprise – stripping away the myths and reviewing the critical success factors. What works and what doesn't. January 6<sup>th</sup> – led by Alison Hill.
- Leadership and sustainability – What are the characteristics of organisations that are sustainable? Survival characteristics including staffing, skills development, critical thinking. May 6<sup>th</sup> – led by Sarah Stone.
- Communication – getting the message across, developing the reputation of sector. November 4<sup>th</sup> – led by Elwyn James.
- Assets transfer and control – co-production, local government reorganisation, how people can control what happens in their community. September 2<sup>nd</sup> – led by Chris Johnes.
- Social Care and Wellbeing Act and implications in the voluntary sector. July 1<sup>st</sup> – led by Jenny O'Hara-Jakeway.

The Talwrn member who leads on the issue will also blog key ideas and findings over the two months until the next theme starts.

## **Local Talwrn**

Each member has undertaken to develop a local Talwrn of around ten organisations. This may be an existing network within which some of the thinking around Talwrn is explored and developed; it may be a local piece of work done with partners to take forward some new thinking; or it may be a piece of action research with partners. Examples of local Talwrns to date are:

*I have set up a meeting (now taking place every 3 months) with the majority of Welsh woodland charities looking at strengthening the voice of the sector, mapping out*

*provision, investigating partnership opportunities, best practice and improving communication between organisations. This was driven by my involvement with Talwrn (Ffion Farnell)*

*We are looking at our own approach as a CVC, at the support we provide and how we look at more models of peer support with groups and how our role can be much more about getting groups together and connecting. We are aware that when we lead, we can be a barrier as we do not want to risk souring our relationships with public service providers (Simon James)*

*The creation of the Wrexham Social Enterprise Network (WSEN). I set this up partly as a result of inspiration gained through my involvement in Talwrn. I could see the value of working in partnership at a national and a local level..... Following on from our discussions on impact at Talwrn at the beginning of March, I put impact monitoring on the agenda for my WSEN meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> March. We had a good discussion at the network about impact and I think set a few hares running among the membership! (Alison Hill)*

People and Work, Arts Factory and Interlink are working together on an area-based approach to tackling disadvantage in the Rhondda called Stronger Rhondda. A steering group has been developed and the work is benefitting from the insights from Talwrn.

## **Reviewing impact**

Members were asked about the value of Talwrn meetings. Simon James writes that Talwrn discussions provide:

- access to good examples of third sector and community development projects and activities in Wales*
- a shared understanding of the challenges we face*
- some thinking space away from front line delivery*
- more awareness of how, as a voluntary sector, we are become public service providers while what we should be is responsive charities responding to individual and community need.*

Louisa Addiscott wrote:

*I have gained valuable support and strengthened my knowledge and understanding of the work of the sector through the sharing of good practice with other members. The varied experiences and similarities shared by partners at Talwrn have given me valuable insights and enabled me to better understand some of the issues I have faced. Through discussion and reflection, I have taken this learning and implemented it into practice.*

For Mark Richardson, Talwrn has broadened his understanding of the issues people in Wales face:

*The main benefit for me of being part of Talwrn is the broader perspective on social issues in Wales than I get from other networks I'm involved in. The diverse nature of the group, but with a shared commitment to creating a better, fairer, more sustainable Wales, helps me to place my own work in a wider context. It has also opened my eyes to the opportunities of working more closely with charitable trusts to achieve social change in Wales, and has led to new collaborations.*

Jenny O'Hara-Jakeway identified how this learning was impacting on her work:

*We are much more confident about our role as a voluntary sector organisation, being independent, pushing the boundaries of practice and being more credible in our approaches. The quality of our strategic plan, which we are currently writing, is better as a result.*

## **Bringing money into Wales**

A key stated objective of Talwrn was for more money to be brought into Wales to support work with people and communities that are disadvantaged by poverty, poor health and/or rurality. Talwrn works to do this through promoting collaboration and strengthening work; peer review of funding bids and project plans; and developing links with funders. Members work on these approaches together, and with other groups and organisations in their networks.

*Collaboration*

A bid has gone to the Lottery for a six partner project (four of which are Talwrn members) to model effective person-centred, strengths based work with people living in poverty. Other collaborations have strengthened members' work:

*Being better networked has also led to collaboration on projects like the Young Carers Forest Schools project with Tir Coed and rebranding our organisation with the Arts Factory. (Jenny O'Hara-Jakeway)*

Elwyn James runs a social enterprise, the Arts Factory, that includes a design studio and website development. Talwrn is helping to develop a new client base.

*We have designed the Talwrn website and have won a fair bit of work from other partners:*

- *Website for Tir Coed.*
- *Impact Reports for Tir Coed.*
- *Website ("Find a Grant") for Interlink.*
- *Brochure for Interlink.*
- *Work on the 'Appening Rhondda project with People and Work.*

Ffion Farnell also identified how Talwrn is helping to develop new networks and contacts:

- *A group in Neath Port Talbot came to visit Tir Coed after Sylfaen put them in contact with us, further work may follow*
- *A visit from Sylfaen to explore future opportunities was very interesting, further work may follow*
- *We signed up with RENEW Wales after Elwyn put me in contact*

### **Funding bids and plans:**

Following a visit to Talwrn from the Chief Executive of the Rank Foundation in the autumn three members – People and Work, Powys Carers Service and Interlink – made successful applications to their funded internship programme (a total investment of over £60,000 over 2016). These three interns started in January 2016 and are tasked with helping to develop the work of their organisation.

*Our Rank Internship, which has come about as a result of Talwrn, is helping us develop our work with Young Carers and understand better what helps them to succeed in learning. (Jenny O'Hara-Jakeway)*

People and Work's intern, Hibah Iqbal, is providing research support to Talwrn members and their networks to help to strengthen their work and funding proposals. So far she has provided background research information to four partners:

*I'm currently trying to identify grant funders who may be interested in looking at the literacy support services gap we have found for young people aged 16-25 years not in education, training or work who have dyslexia. The work that Hibah did on research and policy in this field will be the basis of the applications and will hopefully lead to us access funding. Hibah's work increased my knowledge of the subject area and has given me the confidence to undertake similar research myself. (Val Williams, Sylfaen)*

Sylfaen also received a grant from the Rank Foundation to support training for themselves and partners in identifying and supporting young people with dyslexia and other learning barriers.

Talwrn members have secured funding from other sources. Elwyn James has identified how peer review assisted them at a vital time *'I have learned a lot about writing a decent funding bid and got £25k from Moondance Foundation as a direct result. We wouldn't be here now without it.'* Ffion Farnell was also successful with the same funder *'I became aware of the Moondance Foundation through Talwrn. We applied and they have supported us with £20,000 towards year 3 of our current major project and I hope they'll support our next project'*. Tir Coed is also applying to the Rank Foundation for project funding.

Powys Carers Service also have had funding success:

*Being involved with Talwrn has helped us develop our work with Young Carers and successfully apply to the Henry Smith Foundation and the Waterloo Foundation, raising 165,000 towards support for young carers in rural Powys. Learning more about Trust Funds and how to apply to them has been integral to this success. (Jenny O'Hara-Jakeway)*

**Links with funders;**

Information on Talwrn and its work has been provided to the Tudor Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Big Lottery in Wales, and the Community Development Foundation in Wales. The Chair and Chief Executive of the Rank Foundation attended a special Talwrn meeting in February 2016 and Kai Wooder, grants officer with responsibility for Wales has also attended meetings. These meetings have provided a valuable insight into how charitable foundations and trusts work, and also an opportunity to share some of the key issues facing the Welsh voluntary sector.