



Communities that Work for Everyone

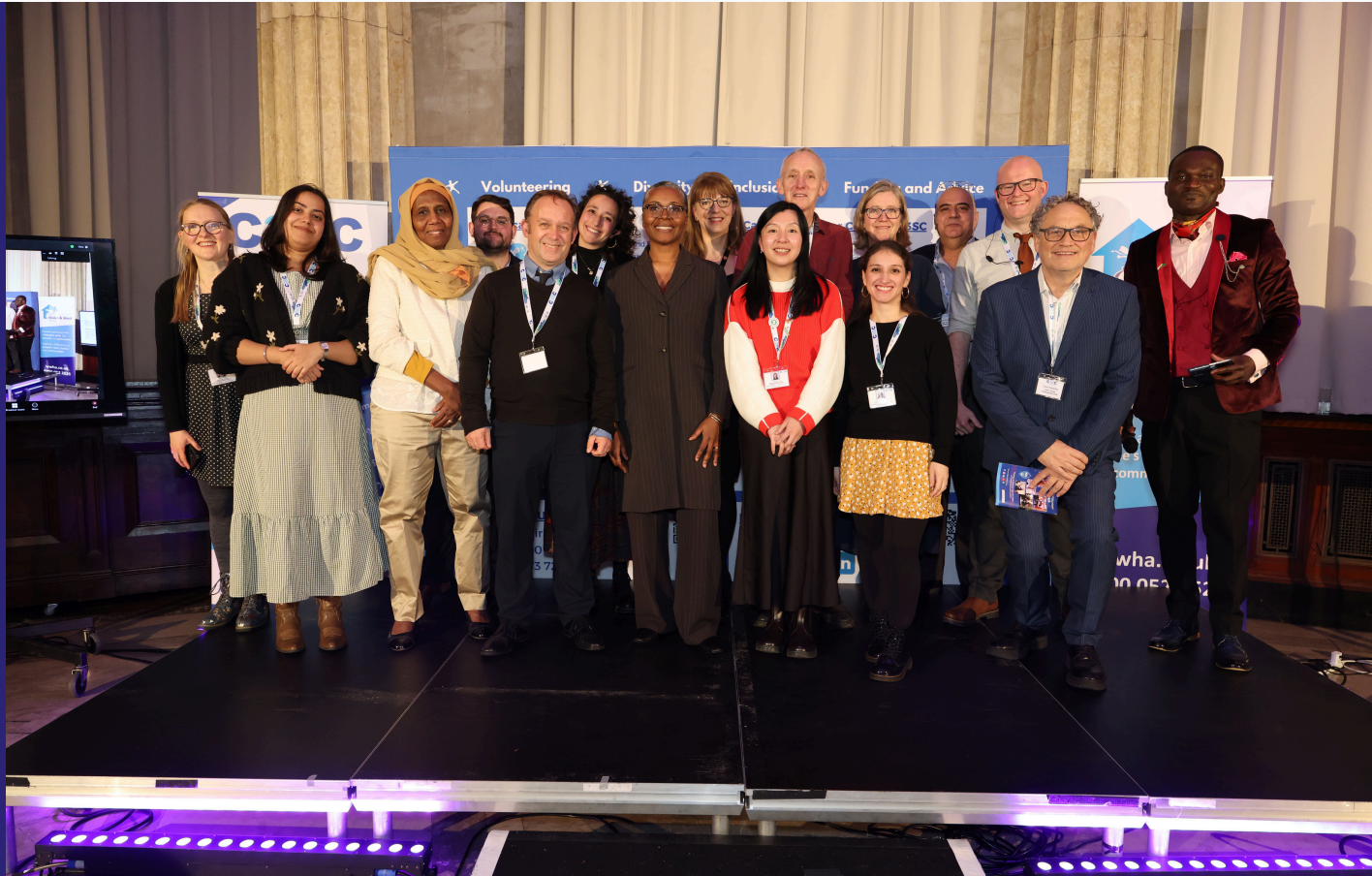


COVER: Cardiff-based community schools come together at the City of Languages Fair organised by C3SC at Cardiff Central Library in March 2026.

ABOVE: C3SC’s Chief Executive Sheila Hendrickson-Brown and Chair of Board of Trustees Paul Keeping prepare to formally open the Annual General Meeting held at Butetown Community Centre.

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WHO WE ARE



Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC) is the local charity and membership organisation with over 1,300 members working to support volunteering and community action in Cardiff. We provide the advice, information, and support that enables voluntary organisations, community groups and volunteers to make a bigger difference together.

We have a long-held, trusted role in Cardiff, providing support and a collective voice for voluntary groups and organisations providing a range of community led services – youth centres, community centres, helplines, social welfare services, foodbanks, environmental projects - that provide employment, enterprise and volunteering opportunities and essential services that help to prevent escalating demands and costs for public services.

As a member of the Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) we fully endorse Wales Council for Voluntary Action's (WCVA) 'Partners for Progress' manifesto, which will help the voluntary sector play its vital role in tackling the issues that are important for people in Wales and the capital city. This manifesto, which comes from our engagement with the sector, volunteers, communities and partners, represents a collective voice from the voluntary sector in Cardiff.

Our message is simple:

Strong communities are the foundation of a fair, safe and thriving Wales.

Across Wales, voluntary and community organisations are

- Delivering services that are a lifeline
- Preventing crises
- Mobilising Volunteers
- Responding to and sharing lived experiences
- Helping to make Wales stronger, fairer and greener

The voluntary sector knows the communities in which we are rooted better than anyone. C3SC and our sister County Voluntary Councils in Wales are supporting community-led services, providing the engine room for growing and strengthening community provision

- Supporting groups to work together to secure funding and resources
- Recruiting and supporting trustees so that services are well run and share the differences the sector is making
- Promoting volunteering so that more people and communities benefit from volunteering
- Being the bridge that connects the voluntary sector's contribution in improving lives with the work of Statutory Services

Yet the sector is operating under sustained pressure, limiting our ability to make the differences we can make, with

- Rising demand
- Unstable funding
- Limited capacity, and
- Systems that exclude the voices closest to people's needs.



LEFT: Local group Horn Development CIC ran a wellness programme - supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Small Grant administered by C3SC - which included a breakfast social club and gardening with the aim of connecting people to reduce isolation and loneliness.

We want to work with the new Senedd to support the sector to be

- Properly valued
- Fairly funded, and
- Integrated as a vital partner.

To do this, we are calling on the next Senedd to

1. Prioritise sustainability and collaboration over short-termism and competition

The voluntary sector delivers essential services that are rarely matched in terms of cost-effectiveness, delivering social value and creating stronger communities. A stable and fair funding environment is needed to enable the sector to play its critical role in improving population health and wellbeing -

- Secure, core, multi-year funding for grassroots community organisations
- Inflation linked funding for infrastructure services weighted to reflect the size of the population and the complexity of delivery in the capital city aligned with good practice in other parts of the UK
- Funding models that drive quality rather than competition and support partnerships rather than division
- Flexible funding models that fund what works and adapt as community needs change
- Simpler funding processes, removing unnecessary and disproportionate requirements



TOP: Members of Cardiff CAN - Community Anchor Network - a C3SC Network dedicated to connecting and supporting placed based voluntary organisations to work together towards developing and delivering services that meet community aspirations and needs.

BOTTOM: A team at Admiral Group were placed into volunteering with Leckwith Drove Allotments as part of their Employer-Supported Volunteering Day supported by the Cardiff Volunteer Centre @C3SC.



ABOVE: Partners from Muslim Doctors Cymru, Sight Cymru, Diabetes UK, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Diverse Cymru, Hindu Council for Wales and The Mentor Ring who supported the Minority Ethnic Communities (MEC) Health Fair 2025 organised by C3SC.

2. Enable communities to be equal and strategic partners

The third sector is in touch with members of the community that are more likely to experience inequality and disadvantage. We can bring the voices and experiences we hear from underserved communities to develop policies and services that create real change. Recognition of community led services in public service planning, commissioning and governance as leaders and experts, and not simply the delivery arm of public services, will help rebuild vital trust with communities who often have the solutions to ensuring their needs are met -

- Allow the time and space needed to build effective relationships
- Take trust-based approaches to funding and accountability
- Give communities a voice and share power in decision making, policy design and service delivery
- Resource community organisations as advisors and partners to help reduce top-down commissioning and ensure that services and initiatives meet the needs of real people

3. Recognise lived experience as an invaluable source of evidence

Communities hold invaluable insight and the third sector is well placed to play a role in meaningful and accessible engagement. By engaging communities early and continuously, the third sector can coproduce meaningful solutions, using its strong local roots to shape services that make real differences and positively impact people's health, prosperity and wellbeing -

- Fewer and better consultations
- Moving consultation and engagement beyond a tick-box exercise to influencing and co-creating informed changes
- Properly resourced trauma-informed and community led engagement using the expertise and trust in the voluntary sector
- Clear feedback routes on how people's contributions have shaped decisions and how community action can support the achievement of agreed outcomes

BELOW: The inaugural Dementia Stakeholder Group Meeting and Forum coordinated by C3SC in early 2026 to connect and strengthen community groups serving people affected by dementia.





LEFT: The Cardiff Volunteer Centre @C3SC hosts a stall at the University of South Wales during Student Volunteering Week, recruiting students into volunteering, including with Tenovus Cancer Care, one of our local member organisations.

RIGHT: Cardiff and Vale College volunteers who have supported C3SC's annual events at the annual Cardiff Volunteer Awards.

4. Recognise that capacity building and infrastructure are essential

Community action and volunteering are essential to creating a healthier, fairer, greener and more resilient Wales, and to reduce the demands and costs on public services, but they require investment and coordination if they are to make the huge contribution to health and wellbeing that they have the capacity to further achieve. The systems that govern statutory sector governance arrangements should support and remove barriers to enabling community action -

- Recognise volunteering as core social infrastructure and fund it accordingly
- Protect community buildings and other resources and support community ownership / long-term leasing, transferring them into community ownership as essential community infrastructure wherever possible
- Fund capacity alongside projects, recognising that prevention, community connection and early intervention save public money but cannot happen without the capacity needed to do this well
- Proportionate, simple and inclusive funding and monitoring processes
- Fund the infrastructure that supports collaboration, data and intelligence sharing, good governance and connection and reduces duplication and services operating in isolation

5. Tackle racism and inequality

It is difficult to see how Wales can prosper if public systems are not clear and transparent. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and other equalities focused priorities, such as the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan, provide the architecture to deliver real change. Community services deliver prevention, involvement and long-term change to positively impact people's wellbeing – it is what we do. Conversely complex, disconnected systems exclude communities by design -

- Employ diverse leadership and commissioning teams
- Actively support smaller, marginalised groups to be heard
- Devise and share clear routes to work with public bodies, such as Welsh Government and local authorities
- Support transparent and accountable decision making that enable implementation of legislative and policy objectives and address gaps
- Recognise and resource voluntary community organisations as key partners in the delivery of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- Support the Third Sector Scheme in Wales, which provides a single point of contact for community development support

Our Call to the Next Senedd:

Wales will **not** thrive from:

- More responsibility passed to communities without resources and support
- More consultations without outcomes and policies disconnected from people
- A lack of stable and well-resourced infrastructure support
- Inequality and disadvantage

Wales **will** thrive by enabling voluntary action through: **Resources. Trust, Shared Power. Support. and Inclusion.**

This is an important opportunity to reset this critical relationship.

- Funding communities
- Involving and trusting communities
- Supporting communities
- Empowering communities

Because a Wales that works for communities works for everyone.

BELOW: Volunteers and partners who supported the Minority Ethnic Communities (MEC) Health Fair 2025 chaired by C3SC, held at Fitzalan High School, Leckwith.

