



THIRD SECTOR LEEDS

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERING IN STRATEGIC PROGRAMMES

APRIL 2021

Context

The response of the third sector throughout Covid-19 has shown that it plays a critical role in enabling communities to be resilient. As we move into the Covid recovery phase there is an opportunity for the third sector and our public sector partners to apply the learning from the last year and develop new ways of doing things together.

At Third Sector Leeds we believe that the third sector -consisting of entrepreneurial and well run small and medium sized enterprises with a social purpose - has a unique role to play in enabling an inclusive economy, in tackling climate change and in tackling health inequalities. Building on firm foundations, we know that by retaining the best of the learning from Covid, the sector can achieve more. Whilst reaching this aim does require resource, the key to building together is for our public sector partners to work with us to utilise our strengths right from the moment they begin to plan new services or interventions in communities.

In the third sector we need to be clear about our strengths and where others are better placed to deliver. One of our great strengths, our diversity, is sometimes a weakness in strategic discussions. Our collective bodies need a seat at the 'top table' and through them we believe we can build on our track record of collaboration to set out the third sector's offer and explore new forms of collective delivery.

Leeds has committed to Localities 'Keep it Local' campaign which sets out [6 principles for community focused services](#). TSL endorses these principles and believes that making them real requires us to be fully involved in co-producing solutions. Leeds has enviable track record of partnership working but we think we can go further. Sometimes we feel like the passive deliverer of commissioned services that are designed by others and we believe that this underplays the insight we gain by being social businesses that are close to communities.

What the third sector offers

- The local third sector can offer benefits (*e.g. around community engagement and empowerment*) that other sectors can't
- We are effective and well-run businesses with an enviable record in innovation in response to social challenges.
- This means that the third sector is uniquely placed to offer additional social value in its activities (we are social businesses that exist to deliver with communities and re-invest in our communities)
 - We generate significant local employment (*it was recently estimated that the third sector in Leeds employs 20,000 people*)¹
 - Our commitment to volunteering enables new pathways into employment (*an estimated 40,000 volunteers*)²
 - We focus on being locally managed and locally led and are embedded in the communities we serve

¹ The State of the Health and Wellbeing Sector in Leeds (2021; publication pending)

²ibid

Our expertise is critical but not universal

- We understand that the third sector will not always be a natural partner in all parts of a programme; in many cases the public or private sector will be better placed (*e.g. in tree planting programmes the third sector is very good at small scale urban community involvement initiatives but the private sector may be better placed to plant on an industrial scale*).

Policy makers can get the best from the third sector if they apply the following principles:

- Engage in conversations about where the third sector has expertise and offers added social value as strategic programmes are conceived.
- Engage the third sector (particularly their collective bodies) early in discussions about programme aspirations and the likely activities that will be delivered
- Discuss with us where the third sector has a distinctive role to play, and where appropriate, plan for our involvement at an early stage
- When considering investment, recognise that third sector adds social value (a core part of our work is building community strengths and we re-invest our surpluses in communities)
- Consider ‘ring-fencing’ areas of delivery for the third sector
- Give enough notice of future strategic opportunities (certainly before invitations to tender are prepared) to enable the sector to scale-up delivery

How we will build on this manifesto

We believe that with small changes in the way our partnerships work we could achieve significantly more together. In many cases the principles we have suggested are deeply embedded in our relationships. This is particularly the case in our most well developed relationships with commissioners of services that put people at their heart; better health and wellbeing, supported housing and improving the lives of children and young people. The challenge is to continue to spread this practice and to deepen it further.

Over the coming months we will collate and share examples of where stronger strategic relationships deliver more across a range of fields.

About Third Sector Leeds

TSL is the forum in Leeds that promotes, represents and advocates for not-for-profit groups and organisations (known as the ‘Third Sector’) in Leeds.

Any Third Sector organisation in Leeds can be a member. We provide information to members about city decisions and seek feedback to help us to influence decisions in the interest of the third sector and communities.

TSL’s work is direct by a Leadership Group who meet regularly. Members are nominated by city forums with particular interests (e.g. Forum Central the health and social care network nominates a Leadership Group member to represent Health). Where no forum exists, positions are advertised and TSL members vote representatives into positions.

You can find a list of our current members [here](#).