

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**VOLUNTARY SECTOR GATEWAY WEST LOTHIAN UPDATE**

**REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on activity of the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice and representing the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Considers and notes the overview provided by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in Appendix one and;
2. Notes the work carried out to support and represent the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Caring and Compassionate Open, Honest and Accountable Collaborate, Inclusive and Adaptive
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	None
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	£63,770 has been awarded to VSGWL from the Voluntary Organisations budget for 2023/24.

- VII Consideration at PDSP** Update reports presented to previous PDPS meetings. With quarterly reports presented to the previous Voluntary Organisations PDSP.
- VIII Other consultations** None.

**D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**

**D.1 Background**

The role of the third sector interface (TSI) is to provide an effective single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within a local area. In addition to the provision of support a key expectation is that the TSI will be a strong cohesive conduit between the third sector, the Local Authority and the Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

The TSI operating in West Lothian is the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL). The VSGWL is an active member on a range of strategic forums representing the third sector and a member of the West Lothian CPP. The sector is also represented on all Policy Development Scrutiny panel's by the VSGWL.

VSGWL receives a grant from the Scottish Government Third Sector Unit and received £63,770 from West Lothian Council in 2023/24 to support the delivery of the TSI role in West Lothian.

**D.2 Current update**

An update from the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian's activity from the April to October 2023 is attached as Appendix one.

**E CONCLUSION**

The panel is asked to consider and note the report by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian. A further update will be provided in March and every six months going forward.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix one

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14 November 2023

## Appendix one

# THE GATEWAY

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

### Progress report from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL)

To be presented at Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) on the 14 November 2023.

- We continue to deliver on our outcomes on building capacity of the sector, volunteering and capturing the voice of the sector.
- Representatives from the Third Sector are continuing to work closely with Council Officials as part of a Working Group.
  - The Group continues to support the Voluntary Orgs Revenue Budget decision-making process and discussing ways of improving arrangements moving forward.

### Third Sector funding opportunities

VSGWL recently launched our £465.7k Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Year 3 fund.

<https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/west-lothian-communities-mental-health-and-wellbeing-fund-year-3-2/>

The fund aims to support community-based projects and initiatives helping address local mental health and wellbeing needs for people aged over 16 years old across West Lothian. **£465.7k** is available for West Lothian organisations for activity in 24/25.

Charities, social enterprises, community and voluntary groups, parent councils, and other third sector organisations operating in the West Lothian area can apply for 2 grant types:

- **Small Grants** (£2k – £10k)
- **Large Grants** (£10k – £50k)

The fund aims to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population.

The closing date for applications was Noon, Wednesday 25 October 2023.

### Evaluation of Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Year 2

The Scottish Government has produced an easy read evaluation of the success of Year 2 fund [Year 2 Easy Read summary](#) .

This is the full list of local organisations and funding awarded from VSGWL in Year 2 of the Fund.

[List of funded West Lothian orgs and projects](#)

### **Food Network support**

VSGWL is continuing to provide independence governance and grant management to the Food Network in West Lothian. West Lothian Council has ringfenced £280k for food support in 2023/24 and VSGWL has established transparent and robust processes for managing and distributing monies to Network Members who are providing food to individuals in communities across the area.

VSGWL is gathering data from funded members about the number of people and families in receipt of food support, including a profile of economic status.

In Q1 2023, 3,859 people received food support. There is a 13% increase in the number of people accessing network services from the previous year.

- Most likely to be between the ages of 30-50 years
- Three quarters unemployed and/or on benefits (78%).
- Majority have an income of £20,000 or less (82%), of that, over half of have an income of £10,000 or less (52%).

Q2 data is currently being gathered from members. VSGWL is chairing regular meetings with the Steering Group and wider full network. There is ongoing discussions with the Food Network about the development of a new legal structure.

### **Social Enterprise support**

VSGWL has held constructive discussions with Community Enterprise about the role of WLSEN and our role in providing social enterprise support. VSGWL will develop plans to hold a networking event for Social Enterprises within West Lothian.

On a wider policy note, social enterprise has moved from the Third Sector Unit to the Wellbeing Economy Division (sitting under Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy).

### **Support to range of third sector groups and forums**

VSGWL continues to regularly bring together a host of third sector organisations in a range of important themed areas, such as

- Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) - [TSSG](#)
- Third Sector Employability Forum- [TS Employability Forum](#)
- Third Sector Cost of Living Forum - [TS Cost of Living Forum](#)
- Children and Families Forum - [TS Children and families forum](#)
- Third Sector Support and Connection Forum – [TS Support and connection forum](#)
- West Lothian Volunteer Network - [WL Volunteer Network](#)

The Third Sector continues to have an important voice on each of the West Lothian Council PDSPs via VSGWL`s seat taken by appropriate third sector representatives.

### **Third Sector Organisation Support events**

We recently held two funding events with the Corra Foundation and the Robertson Trust on the scope of funding and support on offer. Feedback from attendees has been very positive. VSGWL is holding discussions with Martin Thomson, Business Gateway and Douglas Westwater, Community Enterprise on hosting two events on the wide range of free and

dedicated help and support that is available from our respective organisations for third sector organisations. More details will follow once dates are firmed up

- 1 aimed at small grass roots organisations – either late Nov or mid- Jan
- 1 aimed at larger, more established orgs who may need tailored support – late Spring

### **VSGWL secures Living Wage Accreditation**

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) is an accredited Living Wage Employer, committed to paying a wage based on the cost of living to all our staff.

<https://scottishlivingwage.org/employer-directory/vsgwl/>

### **Staffing update**

VSGWL has recently appointed Victoria Isbister to the newly created position of Sector Support Assistant. The important role is providing secretariat and administrative support to all of the themed forums highlighted above.

### **VSGWL annual satisfaction survey 2023**

We have issued a survey to the public and stakeholders to find out what we were doing well and on how we might improve our work moving forward.

<https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/vsgwl-survey-2023/>. Survey was open until 22 October 2023.

The findings will help us to

- Better understand the needs of the Sector
- Identify what we are doing right and where we can improve
- Develop services and our offer of support.

Presented by Alan McCloskey  
Chief Executive Officer  
VSGWL  
October 2023