



MVAin4 working paper 5

Preliminary analysis of within case policy process across the 4 UK jurisdictions, between March 23rd 2020 and March 22nd 2021

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Within case analyses of the 4 UK jurisdictions

Introduction

The implications of devolution have a central role to play in the following analyses. This document represents the within case analysis, whereby the analysis of each jurisdiction is undertaken in context where the parameters of the analysis mean the analytical intention is that only policies relating to that particular jurisdiction are considered, wherever this is possible. The within case analyses are informed by a broader conceptual framework which was presented in WP3 [Preliminary Analysis of policy differences across the four UK jurisdictions](#). The WP3 report set out a framing context for understanding policy variation across the four jurisdictions, in large part due to the fact that voluntary action is primarily identified as an unreserved area of policy, meaning policy making in respect to voluntary action is devolved to the respective jurisdictions.

The within case analyses involved identified policy leads from within the 4 jurisdictions identifying relevant policy documents from the stipulated time period. The decision-making process around the time period chosen for this analysis was difficult. Part of the issue related to the ongoing 'live' context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such that ongoing lockdown and vaccination programmes have had limited success in controlling the virus and the UK is still on a pandemic footing, although there is optimistic talk in August 2021 that the UK may be moving to a more endemic COVID-19 virus footing. The decision was made to analyse policy relevant to voluntary action from across the 4 jurisdictions for the period between March 23rd 2020 and March 22nd 2021. The first date relates to the official point at which the UK, as a whole, entered the first COVID-19 lockdown. The second date marks the point at which communication restrictions for local government were implemented across England, Scotland and Wales in respect to the pending local elections. Other inclusion criteria were that the documents (press releases, official policy documents or reports) had to be issued by the respective jurisdictional government, at a national level. This was because the emphasis was on strategic level responses at a jurisdictional national level. One major complication that arose in the process of the analysis was that due to the online nature of the information, it was not always possible to access the original version of documents. For example, initial government guidance on volunteering safely, which was published on the same day as the initial lockdown, was no longer accessible at the time of analysis, as it had since been updated on numerous occasions (this was particularly true for the English analysis, where the relevant documents were more likely to be guidance documents than policy documents).

The analysis is intended to offer a snap-shot of the policy processes happening during this time, it is not intended as an exhaustive analysis, and indeed the ongoing nature of the pandemic means that the analysis very much needs to be read as an ongoing fluid and dynamic process rather than a statement of veracity or fact. Before commencing the analysis of the England specific policy documents, it is necessary to consider the broader context of the English voluntary action policy making.

The English Context

As reported in the WP3 document, a difficulty emerges in separating the English case out from the other jurisdictions, in that there is no devolved English assembly. To further complicate this policy context, there is currently no explicit voluntary action strategy which is being applied to the English case. This is due to policy divergence from other UK jurisdictions, where the English emphasis is put on civil society, rather than a direct and explicit focus on voluntary action, i.e. the current English policy programme regards voluntary action as a constituent component of civil society. This is a departure from other jurisdictions where the emphasis is on voluntary action as an extant area of policy and strategy, characterised by collaboration and partnership between voluntary action organisations and government. The English divergence is historically located in the so-called Big Society programme of government from 2009/2010 (Woodhouse, 2015), which was subsequently re-visited in 2018 with the publication of the 'Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone', (Cabinet Office, 2018). The prevailing English policy emphasis is perhaps best exemplified by the reproduction of an info-graphic reproduced from this 2018 publication.

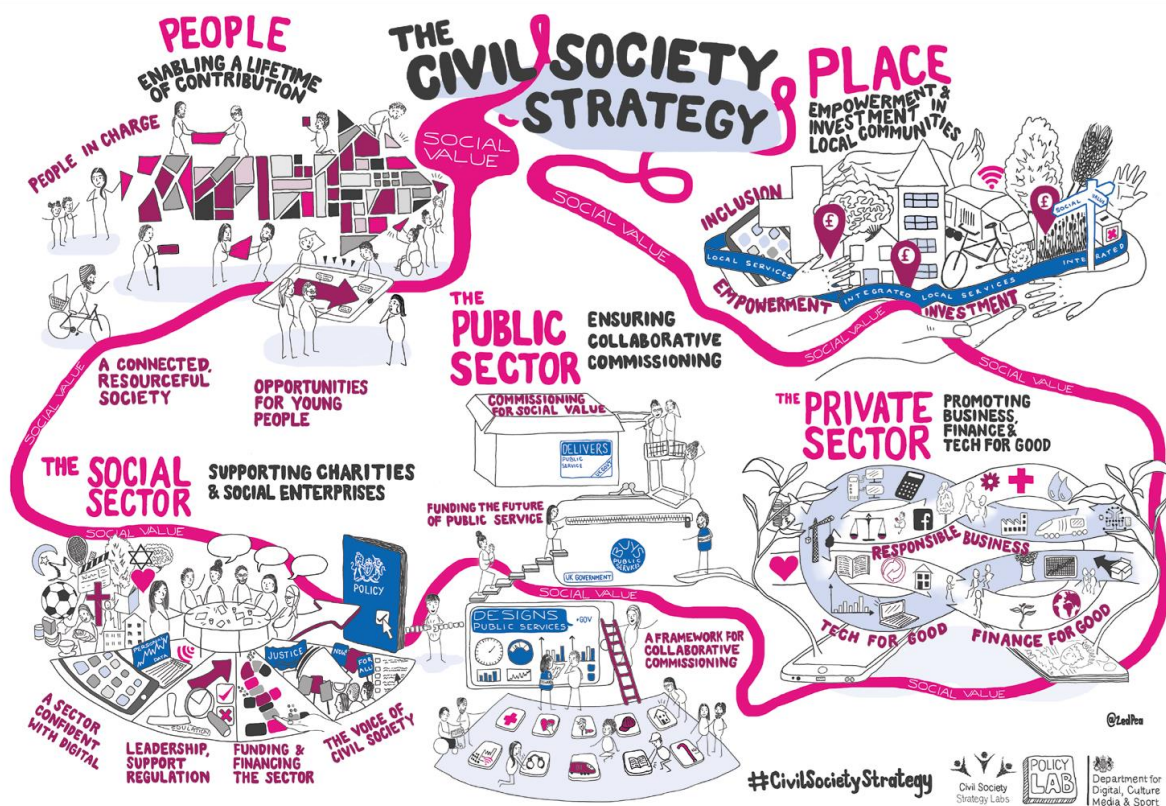


Figure 1: The English Civil Society Strategy 2018 (source: Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone, p.8).

In the context of voluntary action, the most striking initial observation of this info-graphic is the absence of 'the voluntary' in any explicit sense. Rather, this is articulated as 'people' and 'the social sector' comprising charities and social enterprises. Similarly, in the original 2010 policy programme the idea of the 'voluntary' was an amorphous voluntary and community sector (which was never defined), coupled to repeated claims about the need for reduced government and increased activity at local level, with new opportunities for public and civil

society actors (the 'people' identified in the info-graph). This is suggestive of a desire to move away from bounded forms of self-labelled voluntary action, to make these activities something that all people do. As identified in WP3, it is couched within a transactional mode of exchange between the state and individual citizens, where citizens volunteer to do activities that were previously offered by the state. There is a little attempt to engage existing voluntary action organisations in this activity, the appeal is made directly to citizen actors, to engage in voluntary action which facilitates a retraction of the state.

In all there are five constituent parts of the civil society strategy. These relate to 'people', the 'social sector', the 'public sector' (very much at the centre), the 'private sector' and 'place'. It would appear that the public sector retains a role as paymaster, being identified as responsible for commissioning and funding decisions. It is also notable that there is no identifiable role for government in this, in the sense of 'big government'. This is in keeping with the 'Big Society' policy programme, predicated on developing an alternative to big government through "the big Society: a society with much higher levels of personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility; a society where people come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities; a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control," (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.37). This policy programme is predicated on localism and social value, where social value becomes a model to "quantify the extent that particular initiatives contribute to a better functioning, socially cohesive and environmentally sustainable society," (Dowling and Harvie, 2014, p. 880). It is in this context that the rise of evaluation methodologies such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) became prevalent in English public sector commissioning, as a means of quantifying the role, value and input of social enterprises into statutory and non-statutory public services.

The upshot of this policy context is that the idea of a sector of civil society explicitly identified as a centre of voluntary action does not exist. The idea of voluntary action is subsumed under a category of 'social sector' which is part of a broader notion of civil society. This characterisation functions, in part, to construct a very particular version of voluntary action. This particular version offers a different set of relations between the actors, and locates partnership and collaboration outside of the sphere of government, such that government (and local authorities) function more as enabler organisations than provider organisations. That is to say, engagement with the social sector is determined by the public sector through funding and commissioning relations (at a local level), across both the social sector and the private sector rather than at a government level across provider organisations (through partnership and collaboration between government and the voluntary sector). By pushing the decisions around voluntary action down to a local level, the role for central government in the strategic organisation and planning of voluntary action policy and practice becomes diminished and reduced. It is in this context that the analysis of the COVID specific voluntary action response is considered

Here are some notable ways in which councils have been using their communication channels to recruit community volunteers:

Wiltshire Council's volunteer pack and community group map
Staffordshire County Council's I Care campaign
Hackney Council's guidelines for volunteers
Essex County Council – Essex Coronavirus Action
Southwark Council galvanises local community through online groups
Leeds City Council volunteer hub
Worcestershire County Council launches 'Here 2 Help' campaign

Figure 2: Local LGA responses to COVID-19 (source: LGA website, <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/coronavirus-communications-0>)

The review of outputs for the England analysis identified seven documents that were in scope. Most notably this included Levelling Up Our Communities (2020) (the so-called Kruger review) as well as a series of press-releases and guidance documents released by various government departments (see table 1). It should be noted that the Kruger review Kruger is not an example of direct policy making by

English government. Rather it is an example of a report requested of an MP. It indicates an interest from government, but not necessarily a clear and direct policy action. There were explicitly labelled policy documents and strategy documents but these tended, on the whole, to be published by the Local Government Association (LGA) rather than from the 'English' government per se. Thereby, they were excluded from the analysis, but it is noted here that this occurrence reflects very neatly how the existing English policy framework with regard to voluntary action functions to direct how English voluntary action organisations are able to engage in the policy process (or not). This policy context meant that, largely due to the inherent emphasis in English Civil Society policy on localism, the LGA strategic and policy response tended to be dissipated down to a number of different local responses, without recourse to a broader national strategy. For example, see figure two, a screenshot from the LGA volunteers section of their national webpage, where the emphasis is very much on identifying pertinent local responses rather than any cross-arching strategy for LGA's across the country.

Table 1: Identified documents for England Policy Analysis

Date	Title	Type
23/03/2020	Coronavirus: How to help safely (subsequently titled 'Volunteering during Coronavirus' and updated regularly) https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-volunteering/	Guidance document
24/03/2020	'Your NHS Needs You' – NHS call for volunteer army https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/03/your-nhs-needs-you-nhs-call-for-volunteer-army/	Policy press release
07/04/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for the charity sector https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector	Guidance document
15/05/2020	Advice regarding NHS volunteers relating to COVID-19 (version 3) version 2 published 15 May 2020, updated to version 3 17/03/21 https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/04/C1139-Advice-regarding-NHS-volunteers-relating-to-COVID-19.pdf	Guidance document
20/05/2020	Financial support for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to respond to coronavirus (COVID-19) https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19 (first published but updated 17 June 2021)	Funding policy document

06/06/2020	NHS volunteers extend support to frontline health and social care staff https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-volunteers-extend-support-to-frontline-health-and-social-care-staff	Press release
23/09/2020	Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant by Danny Kruger https://www.dannykruger.org.uk/sites/www.dannykruger.org.uk/files/2020-09/Kruger%20.0%20Levelling%20Up%20Our%20Communities.pdf	Report for government

Three of the first four published documents were, as would be expected in face of a public health crisis, guidance notes on how best to continue to contribute voluntary action in the face of the pandemic. The emphasis was very much on what it was safe to do, and not to do in regard to ongoing public health concerns and in light of the developing understandings of the modes of transmission of the virus. The fourth document related to the raising of a volunteer army to ‘help vulnerable people stay safe and well at home’. It was a reactive policy intervention aimed at signing up 250,000 volunteers to help the 1.5 million people in the UK population who were required to shield themselves from risk of exposure to COVID-19 by staying at home. The initiative was a collaboration between the NHS England, NHS Improvement, the Royal Voluntary Service and GoodSAM. The involvement of GoodSAM related to an emergency service deployment application which was used to register and deploy NHS volunteers. The response to this initiative exceeded official expectations, with over 400,000 people volunteering in one day and over 750,000 within four days (Mao *et al.*, 2021). However, initial findings suggest that the NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme (VRS) failed to co-ordinate voluntary action, with fewer than 20,000 tasks allocated to the 750,000 volunteers within the first week of the scheme (*ibid*, p.10). Kevada (2020) argues that the formal nature of the NHS scheme meant that the required safeguarding checks led to delays in assignment of volunteers to tasks. Such was the scale of the NHS VRS that it continued to dominate policy statements from government (often via either NHS England or the Department of Health and Social Care). There were repeated attempts to improve practice based on issuing new guidance, and the scheme was extended to support frontline health and social care staff in June 2020.

In terms of analysis, this leaves the funding policy document for voluntary, community and social enterprises which was published in June 2020, and the much-cited levelling up report (so-called Kruger report) which was published in September 2020. Both of these documents can be read in a more direct and directive policy context, as indicating some degree of policy strategy and commitment for England, from government.

The funding document detailed a pledge of £750m from the UK government to be dispersed across voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across the UK¹. This was broken down across a range of programmes and specific interventions (such as £7.5m to tackle loneliness in England). Nearly ninety percent of the monies (£670m) was directed towards two primary sectors. Firstly (quote) ‘smaller, local VCSEs’ in England were allocated £310m, and secondly, central government departments dispersed £360m to fund charities in England, including £200m for hospices administered by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Within the VCSE funds, nearly sixty-five percent of the identified £310m was allocated to the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), which was administered by the National Lottery organisation. The CCSF stated that it operated on two key objectives, firstly 'to increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis, through the work of civil society organisations' and secondly, 'to reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises, ensuring services for vulnerable people impacted by COVID-19 have the financial resources to operate, and so reduce the burden on public services'. Both of these objectives tend to focus very much on a reactive practical level of response rather than anything more strategic, such as partnership building. Across both substantial allocations of funding, it appears that it is a very top down, centrally driven model of funding. There is little or emphasis on collaboration or partnership models of funding, and the role of central government in the disbursement of monies appears to be central to these processes. This would seem to be in contradiction to the 'big society' model whereby the stated policy intention is to replace the role of big government with a range of civil society-based actors.

In terms of the jurisdictional context, of the total allocated funds, eight percent (£60m) were allocated to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to support frontline charity sector work with people directly affected by COVID-19.

This brings us to the final document, the so-called Kruger review (Kruger, 2020), which proclaims to offer a new social covenant for 'levelling up our communities' in a post-COVID-19 world. The geographical delimitation of this levelling up programme of government is left largely unstated, and we are left to presume it is England specific (because of the unreserved nature of the policy areas) but this does not appear to be explicitly stated within the report. Kruger does make mention of the failed aspirations of the 'Big Society' programme, which he describes as a 'great dream which was never fulfilled'. This failure is attributed by Kruger to the negative narrative of state retrenchment which came to accompany the programme, whereby volunteers were to be found "picking up the pieces from a broken model," (p.12). Rather, Kruger proposes, that government should 'do a deal' with communities, and this deal should mark a more substantial, less transactional characterisation of the respective duties of citizen and state. The Kruger review does not set out an explicit policy programme for voluntary action, rather it seeks to re-articulate the nature of the relation between government and civil society. The remit and ambition of the Kruger's review did not involve developing discrete policy solutions or identifying the funding mechanisms which would facilitate them. This would likely fall to government, if and when they accepted the recommendations of the review paper, but there have not been any clear public pronouncements or policy responses to the review, which could indicate that these might not be regarded as key policy issues. In assessing the Kruger review, Dayson and Damm, (2020) attest that a critical reading of the review might suggest that it fundamentally operates to offer a framework for the further dilution of the boundaries between the state, civil society and the private sector, in turn marking an extension of processes implemented under the Big Society programme, rather than a rebuttal of them as Kruger suggests. The review centres very much on the role and function of central government in relation to a host of civil society actors (loosely corralled around a nebulous and ill-defined notion of 'community') but very little is offered in terms of the extant networks this might build upon, or the new policies that might be implemented to

turn this proposed social covenant into a practical programme of government. As Dayson and Damme (2020) conclude, the Kruger review offers “little in the way of concrete policy proposals or investment strategies through which this vision may be realised” (p.286).

In summary, the prevailing English policy context is one where voluntary action, and the organisations involved in co-ordinating voluntary action, are separate from government. The role of government in this sphere, if there even is a role, is to ensure citizens have opportunity to participate in voluntary action, but in this regard, government is an enabler rather than a provider of these opportunities. The organisations that actually provide these opportunities are seen as being outside of and apart from government. This positioning goes a long way to explaining the relative lack of an extant, voluntary action policy for England. Simply put, the English policy context has not, since 2010, regarded voluntary action as a domain of government, and therefore, the need for policy in regard to this domain has steadily diminished. We see this realised in the context of the pandemic, where the primary response has been concerned with public health guidance to be issued to voluntary action organisations, as if this is the only policy context in which government can be involved with voluntary action organisations. The area of public health is still an area of government policy, so this is where the government is most able to intervene. The suggestion is that the prevailing policy orthodoxy, (from 2010) has largely prevented the development of any concerted national level of voluntary action policy. The devolution of voluntary action policy, through attendant foci on social value and localism is where policies of voluntary action have developed, but these are now diffuse, atomised and highly local, such that the idea of a national level voluntary action policy becomes hard to imagine. Whilst a shift to more local modes of organisation does not necessarily directly correlate with the lack of a national policy, it certainly contributes to a set of conditions which facilitate the political choice not to prioritise voluntary action at the national (English) level. It is of analytical interest that the two policy documents which attempted to invoke a nationwide English response were both predicated upon a rigid command and control model, whereby the central role of government was asserted across a whole range of voluntary action activity. This need for a re-articulation of the role of central government in the national policy sphere appears to be reinforced through the Kruger review, but quite what the prevailing policy context might be for this new role remains unstated and unclear.

I will now move on to consider the other jurisdictional responses. I shall start by considering Northern Ireland.

The Northern Irish Context

Before we consider the Northern Irish COVID-19 response, it makes sense to revisit the broader voluntary action policy context in Northern Ireland, as indeed, there was variation in voluntary action policy between Northern Ireland and the other jurisdictions.

The most recent Northern Irish voluntary action policy document (at governmental level) was the 2012 volunteering strategy and action plan (see WP3). To summarise, this 2012 document emphasised *collaboration with existing volunteering organisations within the community*. There was a stated emphasis on engaging and developing existing activity. The notion of choosing to engage with voluntary action is invoked in this strategy as a principle of democratic participation (whereas in the English context, choice has tended to be

mobilised in policy as an instrument of individualised transactional choice (Glynos, Speed and West, 2014). It is in this context that the COVID-19 voluntary action response takes place, in relatively recently re-called national assembly (beset by ongoing forms of constitutional crisis) and with an eight-year-old policy commitment to collaboration across the community.

The policy context in Northern Ireland in relation to the devolved assembly is somewhat different to the situation in any of the other jurisdictions. In effect there was no devolved government in Northern Ireland between March 2017 and January 2020. This was due to political cross-party difficulties in forming an Executive. The net effect of this was that many Northern Irish policy decisions were made by the UK government during this time. In effect, this function to create something of a policy vacuum in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Irish policy analysis identified six documents that were within scope (although this includes council protocol documents that were published in August 2020 and then updated in November 2020) (see table 2).

Table 2: Identified documents for Northern Ireland Policy Analysis

Date	Title	Type
20/03/2020	C-19 Guidance to volunteers' in the education in supporting key workers and vulnerable children https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/c-19-guidance-volunteers-education-sector-supporting-key-workers-and-vulnerable-children	Guidance document
24/03/2020	Becoming a volunteer https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector (updated June 2020)	Guidance document
??/04/2020	Department for Communities (DfC) COVID-19 Community Response Plan https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-covid19-community-response-plan.pdf (link doesn't work)	Strategy document
??/08/20	DfC Coronavirus protocols for councils who engage Voluntary and Community organisations in regulated activity with adults https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-covid-19-protocols-for-councils-voluntary-organisations.pdf	Guidance document
??/11/20	DfC Coronavirus protocols for councils who engage Voluntary and Community organisations in regulated activity with adults (this was updated in Nov 2020 - https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/11/V2-2677-Protocols-for-CouncilsNOV2020.pdf	Guidance document
??/12/20	Volunteering during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/volunteering-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic	Guidance document

Of the identified six documents, five were guidance documents, aimed at outlining best practice for becoming or continuing to work as a volunteer. These guidance documents

related to voluntary action in educational settings, and in areas of regulated activity with adults in voluntary and community organisations (these were published as protocols and were essentially good governance guidelines). There was a further document that took a strategic, more policy-oriented slant (in that it proposed a national response to the pandemic and was allied to a programme of work, albeit an uncosted programme of work). The document was entitled “COVID-19 Community Response plan: Enabling the Voluntary & Community Sector response to COVID-19”. It identified four strands of activities, firstly, on ‘coordination of efforts on the ground’, secondly around ‘encouraging and supporting volunteers’, thirdly on what could be done in ‘sustaining the effort (supporting community organisations)’ and fourthly in terms of funding. Across these four strands, fifteen actions were identified, and lead organisations (both within and out with government) were identified for each action. Actions include establishing both national and local initiatives. For example, there is emphasis to ensure local delivery of prescription medications and emergency food parcels. But there is also reference to more regional and national plans, such as establishing community helplines, creating directories of active community groups, Nationally there is need to establish a Emergencies Leadership Group (comprised of grassroots and regional organisations), developing new ways of working with council support hubs. There is also of course an identified need to develop new protocols and guidance (and this is reflected in the other documents identified for this analysis). Reference is also made to special funding provisions for a Coronavirus Community Fund, providing grants of between £1000 and £10,000 to community organisations working with people affected by COVID-19.

The emphasis across the document was very much on collaboration and coordination of activities. This document, and the wider policy documents considered for Northern Ireland, make explicit and repeated reference to volunteers and volunteering. There is less reliance on notions of civil society. There is a clearly identified voluntary action sector within Northern Irish policy and it is this sector, coupled to wider community groupings, which the voluntary action policies seek to engage and work with. The lack of a more explicit and sustained voluntary action policy programme in Northern Ireland may be more indicative on the ongoing difficulties associated with maintaining a fully functioning legislature rather than any wider comment about the state of voluntary action in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish Context

The Scottish Government had the most recently published voluntary action policy programme, in the 2019 document *Volunteering for All: Our National Framework* (Scottish Government, 2019). Interestingly, as with Northern Ireland and Wales, the identifier ‘volunteer’ is used explicitly in the policy document. Throughout the policy programme there is a clear commitment to evidence-based policy making, and identifies areas to be developed. The framework also outlines a typology of volunteering, identifying a dimension of involvement from neighbourliness on one end to formal volunteering at the other. This demonstrates a different type of engagement with ideas of voluntary action in terms of policy making, and suggests the Scottish Government has a desire to think about voluntary action in a more nuanced way. While the COVID-19 response was generally national in Scotland, there was also a strong local element in relation to volunteering, e.g. it was locally led in the 32 local authority areas based on local need and coordinated by the Third Sector Interfaces in each local authority area.

The framework makes a very direct and explicit link between increased voluntary action and a successful country, with a range of opportunity for a diverse population, with ‘increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth’, (p.30). This is predicated upon a stated government commitment to ensuring a country ‘where everyone can volunteer, more often and throughout their lives’, in ways which recognise diversity and where the experience is sociable and connects volunteers with other people in the community and wider society.

In effect the framework offers a detailed roadmap towards the development of a state-led framework for voluntary action, which combines the application of voluntary action across statutory provision and the third sector, by developing and supporting voluntary action across a range of stakeholders. Rather than focussing on specific voluntary action organisations per se, the framework focuses more on the development and support of volunteering opportunities across a range of actors. The emphasis is primarily on increasing opportunity for voluntary action across society.

The documentary analysis identified four documents (see table 4) that were in scope. None of these were guidance documents as was identified in other jurisdictions, as public health guidance tended to be directed more generally rather than being voluntary action organisation specific.

Table 3: Identified documents for Scotland Policy Analysis

Date	Title	Type
18/03/2020	Supporting communities funding: speech by Communities Secretary 18 March 2020 https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-communities-funding-statement/	Press release
01/09/2020	Protecting Scotland, renewing Scotland https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotland-renewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/documents/	Policy programme document
23/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20201027075515/http://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-scotlands-strategic-framework/	Framework document
23/02/21	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework Update https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-strategic-framework-update-february-2021/documents/	Framework document

The Scotland COVID-19 policy response appears to be more directive and programmatic than the other jurisdictions. It appears the initial policy response related to funding, and was actually made on 18th March 2020, before the UK wide lockdown. This press release announced a £350million fund to support people in need – identified as the ‘Supporting Communities Funding’. The majority of these funds were to be disbursed through local authority structures, but £50million was allocated to a wellbeing fund to support third sector partners in addressing ‘societal challenges caused by self-isolation or distancing and

compounding the vulnerability of those already living in difficult circumstance'. An additional £40million was allocated to a 'Supporting Communities Fund' and a further £20million was allocated to the Third Sector Resilience Fund to help with cash flow and 'business health' issues within third sector organisations. In total, over £110 million (just over thirty per cent) of the total Supporting Communities Funding was identified as directly or indirectly applicable to third sector organisations.

The next policy document was the 2020-21 programme of government, which was published in September 2020, nearly six months after the initial lockdown. Within the programme of government there were a number of voluntary action policies. These included a Youth Guarantee programme, whereby the option of participating in a formal volunteering programme would be a guaranteed opportunity for all young persons aged 16-24. The programme also makes a commitment to ensuring that the third sector and volunteering can 'thrive and contribute to a recovering economy and society'. This programme of government will seek to do this through a £25million Community and Third Sector Recovery programme, which will provide business focused support so that organisations can adapt their operations and income generation to 'increase sustainability' in the face of the ongoing pandemic. Within this programme of government there will also be an exploration of social investment (including capital loans) in terms of co-locating third sector work in post-COVID working office contexts.

Reference is made to the overall funding of the third sector, with a claimed £120million directly invested in the third sector since March 2020. A total spend on the aforementioned Third Sector Resilience Fund is given as £25million, with a claim of 15,000 jobs being saved directly because of the fund, and a saving to the public purse of £125million.

There is little direct and explicit voluntary action policy identified in the programme of government. This is perhaps better reflected in the work that organisations like the Social Renewal Advisory Board are doing (in conjunction with Volunteer Scotland and other voluntary action organisations, but they are not government bodies). What is very apparent in this programme of work is that the third sector (somewhat ill-defined) is centrally and directly invoked into the job of partnership and collaboration with government.

The final two documents mention volunteering somewhat, but it is a re-statement of the commitments made in regard to the Third Sector Resilience Funding plan. Somewhat paradoxically, on the evidence of the available documents, it would appear that voluntary action policy making is something that occurs largely outside of the role of government in the Scottish context. Whilst emphasis is placed on collaboration and partnership, the evidence of this, in a policy making sense, is largely absent.

The Welsh Context

The background context for the Welsh analysis is that there was a more recent policy commitment to voluntary action, with the 2015 document 'Volunteering Policy: Supporting Communities, Changing Lives'. This Welsh Government (2015) document makes a very explicit commitment to supporting volunteering, which is characterised as an "important expression of citizenship and as an essential component of democracy," (p.3). The emphasis is very much on developing ongoing voluntary activity in Wales. Reference is also made to

principles of democratic participation, with volunteering described as an ‘expression of democracy – people exercising their right to associate and act for change’. Clear lines of accountability are stated between third sector organisations and government. Across the document there is a clear commitment to a very positive framing of the social value of volunteering, where it is regarded as something that adds positive value to a range of relations and engagements across individuals, communities and wider society, and where voluntary action works in tandem with, and is supported, by the state. The strategy is very clear in constituting who the range of relevant actors are, and in attributing a programme of activities for those different actors, across a clearly defined field of voluntary action.

The document search identified five documents which fitted the criteria, but this in large part was structured by specificities of the Welsh context. Much of the response to COVID-19 was co-ordinated by and through the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), a national membership body for voluntary action in Wales. It is not a government body (arm’s length or otherwise) and whilst it is clearly involved in policy making discussions, it does not have the authority to make national policy. There were many policy documents produced by the WCVA but they were not included for analysis here.

Of the four identified documents (see table 3), there was an initial guidance document published a week after the initial lockdown on volunteering in a time of COVID-19, (and have been subsequently updated). More analytically interesting in terms of the present project was the initial guidance on support for the third sector which was published within one day of the UK wide lockdown¹¹. This document announced £24million of additional funding to support the third sector specifically in relation to ongoing issues raised by the pandemic. This funding was across three broad strands of activity, firstly helping charities and third sector organisations through the crisis (Third Sector Resilience Fund), secondly, by helping more people volunteer (Voluntary Services Emergency Fund) and thirdly by strengthening the third sector infrastructure (Third Sector Infrastructure Enabling Fund). Across these policies there is clear commitment both to mobilising a society level response and a citizen level response. The Voluntary Sector Emergency and the Voluntary Sector Recovery Funds were available from £10k upwards to £100k and targeted at organisations with demonstrable records of delivering community support with KPIs of number of volunteers involved and number of beneficiaries supported. Smaller grants were available from the County Voluntary Councils as well as from external organisations such as the National Lottery Community Fund, Moondance Foundation and Community Foundation Wales.

Table 4: Identified documents for Wales Policy Analysis

Date	Title	Type
24/03/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for the third sector Support for the third sector and charities during the disruption caused by COVID-19 https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-the-third-sector.html	Guidance document
27/03/2020	Multi-million pound boost to support volunteers and Wales’ most vulnerable https://gov.wales/multi-million-pound-boost-to-support-volunteers-and-wales-most-vulnerable	Press release on funding policy

30/03/2020	Volunteering during the coronavirus pandemic How you can safely help vulnerable people during the coronavirus pandemic. https://gov.wales/volunteering-during-coronavirus-pandemic	Guidance document
??/07/2020	Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak, and its management, on health and social care in Wales: Report 1 https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s103150/Inquiry%20into%20the%20impact%20of%20the%20Covid-19%20outbreak%20and%20its%20management%20on%20health%20and%20social%20care%20in%20W.pdf	Inquiry document (with published recommendations)

Furthermore, and this is pertinent in the context of the policy analysis, the disbursement of the Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) was to be co-ordinated by WCVA. This indicates a real commitment to collaborative partnership across government and voluntary action organisations. Two additional phases of monies have been disbursed under the TSRF scheme, and these have also been co-ordinated by WCVA. The scheme allocates 75% of its funds to grants to incorporated voluntary sector organisations and 25% loans, worth up to £75,000 per organisation. The application process was robust using an online portal, the monies were swiftly distributed, and monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place, including the commitment from beneficiary organisations to produce case studies. This framework would suggest that WCVA is directly in partnership with the Wales Government. The guidance document also makes mention of building a nationwide response based on the relative success of the pre-established Wales Volunteering digital network. This framework would suggest that WCVA is directly in partnership with the Wales Government. The document also makes mention of building a nation wide response based on the relative success of the pre-established Wales Volunteering digital network. This is to be a central process in all three strands of the funding policy. This demonstrates an awareness and engagement, on part of government, with existing structures within the voluntary action sphere. This indicates that there was an extant voluntary action sphere at national level which it was possible to engage with, and a willingness from government to centre the response in and around this sphere of voluntary action.

The final document that was identified was a Senedd inquiry report which was published in July 2020. Subsequent reports in this inquiry were published in the intervening 12 months. Whilst it is not a policy document *per se*, it is included here for two primary reasons. It indicates an emphasis within the Wales response towards evidence-based policy making (the inquiry was supported by a nation-wide survey). The document outlines twenty-eight recommendations in relation to the initial response to COVID-19 in Wales. Reference is made to the need for better co-ordination (through the Wales Local Government Association) between third sector groups and local government, whilst also noting that the approach in Wales had ‘built on existing partnerships between local authorities, the third sector and community and town councils’, (p. 48). Reference was also made to a difference in shielding guidelines for Wales, whereby, unlike England, people in Wales who were shielding were not asked to register as vulnerable. Rather the policy was that people in this category seek help initially from family, friends and neighbours or online services, and then ask local voluntary organisations, before contacting their local authority for help. This

suggests an attempt to limit the amount of people directly seeking local authority support for shielding. In one sense it can be read as shifting support for shielding people down to community level, but in another, it could be seen as a rationing of statutory provision.

Summary of Analyses of four jurisdictions

The analyses in this report are intended to be read as stand-alone snapshots of the individual jurisdictions. They are not intended to be read comparatively, although in part this is inevitable and unavoidable. The analyses demonstrate the ways in which the prevailing policy contexts in the four jurisdictions are simultaneously similar and different. The context of each policy context in each jurisdiction is different.

The implications of these differences become clear when we consider how the prevailing policy contexts both structure and are structured by the policy responses in relation to voluntary action and COVID-19. It is a hypothesis that in the English case, there has been a lack of national policy response because voluntary action has been ceded as an area of concern for national government, and this responsibility has been passed down, via incipient localism to local authority actors. So in this context it is not possible to identify a national English policy response. In relation to Northern Ireland, the prevailing non-functioning of the national assembly has structured a response which has in itself struggled in the context of a political vacuum, which (as in England) has been filled more a reliance on public health guidance rather than voluntary action strategic policy. Scotland and Wales to have mobilised more of a national level strategic policy response, and it is one that as explicitly identified and collaborated with a range of identified relevant voluntary action organisations and actors. The Wales response appears to be the one most embedded with existing provision, but as stated, this may be an artefact of the analytical process, as much of the Scottish work seems to be ongoing in external advisory boards etc, which are not working in the same ways with government as in the Welsh case (e.g. WCVA directly disbursing government funds).

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^I Full details of the VCSE funding package are available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/998185/360-giving-schema-titles_.ods accessed July 2021

^{II} There is some inconsistency in the time lines on these documents, the Welsh Government website attributes publication date to 24th March 2020, but then reference is made to 27th March.