

Saying Goodbye – The Impact of Brexit on Communities in Britain

Tom Togher, CEO, Salford Citizens Advice

Kush Chottera, Executive Director, Europia

Nathan Yeowell, Head of Policy & External Affairs, NPC

Tom Togher gave a presentation which covered how the VCSE sector needs to look at their Human Recourse policies and procedures in preparation for Brexit. He then went on to provide an overview of the European Settlement Scheme and talked about the support services available to support people to register to remain in the UK.

Kush Chottera gave a presentation from the perspective of the Europeans. Kush described the result of the referendum feeling like there had been a death in the family coupled with guilt around whether Europia could have done more. Kush then went on to describe the experiences of Europeans since the referendum which highlighted the issues of Hate Crime. Kush gave some examples of people's experiences and how Brexit has changed the perspective of Europeans around their identity and sense of belonging.

Nathan Yeowell talked about how Brexit has affected the sector, highlighting research following the referendum which stated that 76% of charity leaders felt that Brexit would adversely affect their communities and would create uncertainty around VCSE funding. He also talked about the vortex in Whitehall as a result of Brexit dominating domestic politics. Nathan then went on to talk about the role of the VCSE sector in particular how the sector is able to engage with communities and fill some of the gaps. Nathan finished his presentation with a question around whether the VCSE sector is capable of taking back control and how it may respond if article 50 is revoked or we leave with no deal.

The presentations were followed with a very lively debate and the following three priorities were identified:-

- Development of a strategy (co-created with communities) for how the VCSE Sector can support people to feel empowered to challenge racism and extreme views, and create spaces for open honest non-political conversations about Brexit and its impact on community cohesion
- Engage young people in Brexit conversations, working with them to find solutions to the impact on communities
- Community Cohesion development work with communities – celebrating diversity and changing hearts and minds