

25 MARCH 2024

REPORT OF EAST AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The report provides an update regarding the work of the East Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network

2. Background

2.1 To develop the capacity and influence of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across the City, Area Networks have been established. Delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area, reporting on area priority delivery by the VCS, and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.

2.2 East Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

2.3 The East VCS Network is made up of over 100 local groups and strategic local/national/regional partners. The network meets on a regular basis to share good practice, support one another and receives regularly updates as part of an information share e bulletin distributed via the Sunderland VS Alliance.

3. East Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCSN) Progress Report

3.1 The East VCS Network met in December at Stockton Road United Reformed Church, in February at St Michael's Community Centre, and in March at St Mark's Community Association.

3.2 The meetings included the following agenda items:

- A presentation on Go Online Sunderland – current and emerging projects and opportunities
- An introduction to the Enterprising Sunderland UKSPF Project
- An update on the work of Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance
- Information on the work of Sunderland Music Hub
- Networking and Information Sharing Opportunities

3.3 The meetings were well attended and provided participants with opportunities to share information about activities and events happening in their respective organisations.

3.4 Delivery of Links for Life projects has now commenced across the East area. Drawing upon learning from the warm and welcoming spaces, the projects are intended to provide support for residents through the provision of activities which bring people together, enable active engagement and improve health, wellbeing, and financial resilience.

3.5 Organisations have been invited to apply for a call for project through Public Health to expand community based mental health and emotional wellbeing provision that is available for men in Sunderland.

3.6 Digital Health Hubs have been set up across the East Area through Sunderland City Council and are working closely with the Digital Inclusion Lead. Training opportunities have

been provided. Investment has been made to improve the buildings digital infrastructure. East Area organisations have attended their first Digital Health Hub Catch Up.

- 3.7 Opportunities have been shared through Community Resilience team to the network including training, funding and workshops.
- 3.8 East VCS Reps have attended a catch up with all area reps from across the City.
- 3.9 The Network representatives regularly consult with the Network to ensure that the agenda items reflect their requirements.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are requested to:
 - note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the East VCSN.

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