

16th October 2014

REPORT OF WASHINGTON AREA COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regard to the Washington Area Community and Voluntary 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 and delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.
- 2.2 Washington Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

3. Washington Area Community and Voluntary Sector Network (ACVSN) Progress Report

- VCS Network will continue to work on developing and supporting the VCS re collaboration, communications, intelligence and mapping.
- The Network held a health focused workshop in July to feed into the considerations of the People Board's Strategic Health Working Group. A number of key issues were raised and practical activity and solutions identified. Please see **Annex 1** for a detailed summary. The Network requested that the People Board consider these proposals when determining the next steps with regard to addressing the Health and Well Being priority.
- The Network has also received a presentation from the DWP re Welfare Reform and the Social Justice Initiative. Following information sharing re the roll out of Universal Credit and 'claimant commitment', referrals and capacity of VCS organisations to support residents, support in Job Centres and the digitisation of Job Centres, Social Justice Coaches (for claimants with multiple barriers), the Network requested that this issue be discussed at People Board level.
- The Network reps are also keen to discuss how to broaden the reach of the Network and ensure the roles of the reps are developed and promoted and support the development of local grassroots organisations.
- The Network agreed new Terms of Reference attached as **Annex 2** of this report.
- The Washington Trust has now appointed the Community/Volunteer Co-ordinator post funded through SIB. The project proposes two key strands, one to support current organisations operating in Washington and help them with succession planning and ensure sustainability to develop a thriving VCS in Washington and secondly a strand that will develop and support volunteers.
- The Network will also look to present an 'Annual Review' to the Area Committee to highlight successful projects and activity which have contributed to delivering the Area Committee's priorities. The Area Reps will have a key role in collecting and collating information and case studies from members of the Network and presenting the report to Area committee as part of the annual reporting processes.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are requested
- To note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington ACVSN

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Washington Area Network

Washington Area Network Health Workshop July 15th 2014

A key priority is to link residents to better health services that they need. The following issues and activities were identified by the Network.

Key issues/gaps raised:

- Promotion, PR, Communication – gap re communication between sector leads and the VCS
- Information sharing – information days & health events, use other events to promote health messages. Need to better utilise Well Being Directory and information better – better public access. Promote and better use of the 'Community Directory' – already public access on sunderland.gov.uk
- Links & Networks – links between sector leads and VCS organisations/local people. Need to 'share' at a local level. Better Signposting.
- Promotion of 'commissioning' opportunities to grassroots organisations
- Health Trainers – links between the service and local organisations to develop appropriate pathways
- Contact and engage people where they are (not expect them to come to you)

Communication and engagement:

- A need to develop a robust communication strategy / plan for Washington. Overall commitment to providing information in a variety of ways form sector leads – resource implications? Who holds the information/ who can or will collate regularly?
- Three key points – ensure local community level intelligence / data / needs are collated and fed into the appropriate mechanisms. This can be Public Health, the CCG, or indeed for people to use in funding applications / monitoring.
- Communication to inform commissioning opportunities to be based on robust intelligence and real need in local communities. Listen to what local organisations are saying to inform delivery
- Improve communication between health providers/services and the grass roots VCS organisations. Need a simple method of communication that allows a 2 way process between both sectors to eliminate top down approach and ensure every action has a positive outcome for residents. Need those groups who are not part of the 'health networks and partnerships' to be provided with information to signpost and support residents seeking services from health providers?
- Service providers / community groups need to know who delivers what and where, and how to access these opportunities. The Network to support joining this work up? Informed by first point re local data.
- Ensure local organisations delivering services and initiatives are considered and contribute upfront to 'networks' and partnership Action Plans - e.g. Wellbeing Network Action Plan, New horizons Partnership – a regular bulletin for VCS organisations letting them know what is happening, any commissioning opportunities etc. How do the action plan of these partnerships and networks impact locally? How do local organisations find out what is happening – key action required.
- Ensure local people know about services they need, when they are ready to access them. Rather than try and continually try and update leaflets / posters, and cascade info to a wide range of people, focus on key organisations / structures within the community.

Practical Activity / Action Proposed:

- Establish a Community Connectors scheme for Washington – health based. Cascade information, provide support etc. For example, promote Wellbeing .org and ensure community connectors are able to routinely and systematically able to convey up to date info on this site (or others). So wherever a person is, that group, organisation or connector gives the same info – but local info, local number of a local service – not a city-wide helpline
- Well being directory to be easily accessed (e.g. on desk tops) for
 - a. Public access – e.g. EVHs

b. For organisations to signpost users to relevant services easily – or to public access of the directory

- Promote and better use of the SCC 'Community Directory'
- Design and develop appropriate pathways – to direct local residents to the right support and services. Providers/sector leads to work directly with local VCS groups and organisations who have direct 1:1 contact with individuals requesting support advice and guidance
- Regular Washington monthly newsletter or bulletin – also include what's happening in key sector partnerships (Washington MIND to lead?) – Groups to receive information about who is leading on what, what are the current issues, what can local groups do to help support a services or initiative
- Find a way to provide simple advice and leaflets etc. so that volunteers who have not completed any of the health trainer or health champions programmes can provide basic information or direct them to the relevant provider/service
- Give NHS community staff the info above (communication) to routinely give to patients / vulnerable people they see at home – they won't necessarily be accessing another service.
- Test out some practical collaboration between communities / community groups and service providers.
- Join existing provision with need, communication will lead to more effective access, or at least a more effective means to identify issues.
- Train specific organisations and workers to signpost etc. – need to be robustly informed or provision and support. Can we design and produce a card or leaflet.
- Key contact sheet
- New Health Champions module re information, advice and guidance
- 12 month 'Health Improvement Promotion Project' with a different focus every month - suggest 'Ha'way Man' style leaflet and approach and 1:1 contact - in venue where people go rather than expect them to come to us – to get messages out. Link this to implementing a plan for several practical service related events – bringing services into specific communities. Not fun days, but promoting access into support. Use PH Health Bus?

Sunderland Voluntary & Community Sector Networks

Terms of Reference

Aims:

The Voluntary & Community Sector Networks aims are:

- To develop the capacity and influence of the VCS across the City.
- To work together to build relationships within communities and between communities and local services
- Recognised route of Council engagement with the VCS
- To work together to develop and share good local VCS practice.
- To provide three delegates to represent the area VCS at Area Committees, and at Area boards where relevant, influencing strategic policies and practice that affects local communities and the VCS. The three delegates will represent the whole VCS in their area at the Area Committee and the Boards rather than their own organisational interests.

Objectives

- To maximise the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue and ways of working between the Council and wider VCS organisations activity.
- To support the development and delivery of Local Area Plans in meeting communities needs, and building the community's capacity to engage in the development and delivery of services.
- To identify and respond to community cohesion and social inclusion issues or concerns in order to create opportunities for integration and improving longer term engagement and involvement.
- To demonstrate the value of the VCS and the positive impact made by the sector.
- To determine three delegates to represent the VCS Network at Area Committee who will take forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area and report back. Those delegates will also attend an Area board where relevant.
- To agree a VCS co chair, annually, for the VCS Network (the co chair being one of the three delegates to attend Area Committee)
- Be consulted on future Council plans and strategies
- Attract and secure external funding into the area/City

Membership

Membership is open to all VCS organisations which operate in Sunderland. However, members who become delegates to Area Committee are encouraged to follow the principles of the Sunderland Compact.

Membership of the network can also comprise of representatives from any sector working or volunteering in the area. This can be representatives from public and statutory authorities such as the Council, Councillors, Police and Health Services or other organisations such as Gentoo, local schools and businesses who have a commitment to working with and supporting the VCS

All organisations attending the VCS Networks are encouraged to follow the principles of the Sunderland Compact where relevant, ensuring positive and productive relationships for mutual advantage and community gain.

Organisations must have an operational base within the area to represent the VCS Network at the Area Committee. However, any organisation that operates across Sunderland is welcome to attend any VCS Network.

Meetings

- Meetings to be held approximately every six weeks or as determined by each VCS Network .
- Support will be provided by Sunderland City Council's Scrutiny & Area Arrangements function. This support will include, for example, secretariat support for meetings, support to understand specific agenda items through briefing notes, facilitating collaborative working in line with Local Area Priorities, 1-2-1 meetings, presentations, facilitation of pre-meetings.

- Sunderland City Council will support the network operating under a co chairing arrangement involving the Area Committee Chair and a Network delegate.
- Partner organisations can be invited to take part/ present items / share information on a specific topic in a format determined by each Area Network.

VCS Area Committee Representation

Nomination Process:

- Three delegates to represent the VCS at Area Committee as partners will be determined through a self-nomination process
- Three delegates must be working or volunteering within a VCS organisation that will be encouraged to follow the principles of the Sunderland Compact.
- The self-nomination process will be carried out by a rolling programme in April every year, where one of the representatives will be given an opportunity to stand down. Cycle of induction and training can be arranged for new members whilst retaining the expertise of the other two representatives. The self-nomination process will also be carried out if a delegate stands down earlier.
- Positions are to be made openly available and advertised in the local area to VCS Network members with appropriate consultation time.
- Where more applications are received than the number of positions then a selection process will be considered within the Network. Each nominee will be expected to deliver a presentation on their strengths, suitability and reason as to why they want to be a representative prior to a decision being made by the VCS organisations present.

Key Tasks:

1. Attend Area Committee meetings approximately five meetings per annum and additional meetings such as Area boards as appropriate (on invitation), site visits and training sessions from time to time.
2. Reading papers and reports in preparation for committee meetings
3. Ensuring feedback and communication between Area Committee and VCS Networks is consistent.
4. Respecting the views of other members and taking forward to Area Committee the opinions of other members or contributors where this will lead to an improvement for the Area and City, and supporting other members in the process of change.
5. Being prepared to learn from others and from good practice elsewhere and to further develop the breadth of your knowledge of your sector's role within the Area and City.
6. Attending a quarterly City Wide Area Representatives meeting to share good practice, enable a consistent city wide approach to the networks and to identify possible collaboration opportunities.
7. Supporting the production of Reports to deliver to each Area Committee and an annual review at the end of each municipal year, in line with the Area Committee's annual review schedule.
8. Engaging in an induction programme to the Area Committee.

Key attributes:

1. Interest in local matters.
2. All should be encouraged to follow the principles of the Sunderland Compact.
3. Representatives should seek to represent the VCS Network (rather than own organisational interests), therefore representatives should have a broad perspective across the Area / VCS.
4. Demonstrate commitment to the VCS.
5. Effective communication skills, particularly listening and questioning skills.
6. Ability to weigh up information.