

13 March 2024

REPORT OF COALFIELD AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regard to the Coalfield 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 and 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 Coalfield 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 Coalfield 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. Coalfield Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCSN) Progress Report

- 3.1 The Coalfield VCS Network met on 5th of December 2023, 6th of February 2024 and are scheduled to meet on the 5th of March 2024 at Easington Lane Community Access Point (ELCAP)
- 3.2 The meetings have included the following agenda items:

5th December 2023

Go Online - Coalfield

Nicol McConnell shared a presentation with the group about digital development and support available. The information was well received, and Nicol shared her contact details should any groups require further information.

Hetton New Dawn will be starting up a new digi group each Monday from 1-3pm commencing on 8 January 2024. There will be 6 new laptops available for use and support will be available from Ken Lamb, Springboard.

6th February 2023

Sunderland Culture House

Leanne Littlewood introduced herself as the director of Culture House Sunderland. The Culture House will sit pride of place on Keel Square & is expected to open its doors to the public in Summer 2025.

The Culture House will offer residents & visitors to the city, a place to explore & find new culture. The impressive building will use large screens to enable regular change of content, the ground

floor will house exhibitions with STEAM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Art & Maths) as a focus to match learning themes with cultural activities.

Plans have purposefully allowed for space to be designed by young people; the aim is to ensure the space is influenced & created by those who will use it.

Leanne also gave an update on Houghton Library which will open as a Creatively Smart City Hub Spring 2024. Upgrades include a podcast studio, upgraded meeting space & an improved programme.

Sunderland Carers Centre

Sunderland Carers Centre presented the Network with a presentation sharing who they are and what they offer. They offer support to unpaid carers including Young Carers from aged 5+ and Young Adult Carers from age 16-25. Sunderland Carers Centre offer support as well as signposting to suitable services. They are encouraging anyone who works with young carers to get in touch as outreach support can be offered and further signposting & support offered.

Contact details were shared to VCS organisations if support was required for any carers we are supporting through activities in the coalfield area – contactus@sunderlandcarers.co.uk

The presentation which was shared with the network included:

- What defines a carer
- Carers in Sunderland
- Identifying a carer
- Impact of Caring
- Sunderland Carers Centre offer

VCS Rep Update

Amy Swan informed the network that she is stepping down as Coalfield VCS Rep. Wendy Cook has recently started a new role with Active Families North East, both Wendy and Amy agreed that because Wendy has been a VCS Rep for longer that she will continue in the role and Amy would step down. A VCS Rep is the go-between for VCS and Area Committee. Nomination forms have been circulated & the deadline for submission is 12pm on Tuesday 20th February.

The network would like to thank Amy Swan for her contribution to the Network.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are requested

- To note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Coalfield VCSN.

Contact: Amy Swan, Coalfield Area Network Representative.
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