

8 June 2016

## 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 (VCS) 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 the Networks 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.

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

The Coalfield VCSN has met twice since the last Area Committee in March 2016.

#### 3.1 April 2016

##### **Family, Adult and Community Learning (FACL)**

The Network received a presentation by Carolyn Bowes of FACL. She explained that external funding is received from the Skills Funding Agency which is used to procure training from subcontractors, predominantly VCS organisations. Training is both accredited and non-accredited for families and adults. Procurement opportunities are now open, and the process was explained to Network members to encourage those who were eligible to apply to deliver training.

##### **Coalfield Area Priorities**

The Network discussed 2016/17 priorities for the area and agreed that the draft list circulated for consideration covered the issues they feel are important. In particular, it was noted that support for community organisations and volunteers was crucial moving forward. The Network was pleased to see issues around mental health, and social isolation, would be addressed in the coming year.

##### **Summer Celebrations**

Led by the VCS Representatives, a steering group of Network members is planning a series of summer activities based on the theme of Rio Olympics. Four events (one in each ward) will take place, leading up to a 'grand finale' at Kepier Academy for the whole area. All Network members, partners and colleagues were invited to attend the event at Kepier which would also act as an opportunity for local organisations to showcase their services and activities and engage with local residents.

##### **Food Poverty**

VCS Representatives attended a presentation on 5/4/16 at Durham University looking at holiday hunger, food banks and other food poverty issues. There were various organisations giving presentations (circulated to Network members). Some of the local activities for children and families being delivered during summer holidays will include opportunities for cooking/eating.

##### **Feedback from NEET(not in employment, education or training) Panel**

Connexions has set up a panel of relevant organisations who work with young people, to tackle the most hard to reach young people on their register. This is a new way of working, focusing on young people living in the Coalfield area. There are 116 young people across

the area who are not engaging in any form of training, education or employment. The aim of the panel is to work collaboratively across all sectors to support young people in a person-centred way.

## **May 2016**

### **Summer Celebrations**

Venues and dates for summer celebration Olympic events are being finalised. A total of 16 local groups have been awarded funding to hold their own events celebrating the Olympics or the Queen's Birthday.

### **SIB funded 'Increasing Capacity' project**

Sonia Newhouse commenced her role as Volunteer and Community Support Officer on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016. Sonia will have bases at Shiney Row and the Flatts, Easington Lane and be available across the whole of the Coalfield community to support local groups.

Development packs for volunteers are being prepared and a Volunteer Registration form has been produced. Training for volunteers will be delivered by SN or a specialist service and a volunteer steering group will offer support to volunteers. The project will tailor support to the needs of organisations and volunteers.

### **Feedback on Funders**

It has been reported by a number of regional funders that Sunderland is a 'cold spot' with regard to successful funding applications. Network members were asked their views and experience of applying to specific funders in order that information can be fed back to these funders on the barriers and issues faced by local groups when applying to them for grants.

### **Network Membership**

The Coalfield VCS Network meetings continue to be well attended and are seen as the recognised route for local organisations to receive and share information with Sunderland City Council, statutory and voluntary sector partners and each other. On average 30 – 35 people attend the meetings and over 100 are on the mailing list. All local organisations are encouraged to engage with the Network and take part in activities and meetings. This will be further developed over the coming year.

## **4. Recommendations**

### **4.1 Members are requested**

- To note the contents of the report
- To continue to support the Sector when developing and implementing actions against local priorities
- To identify any local groups or organisations who would benefit from the 'Increasing Capacity' project or being part of the VCS Network.

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