

Coalfield Area People Board Proposal for SIB allocation

Priority: Support and enable local delivery of services

- **Increase support for existing and new groups to deliver services**
- **Increase support and co-ordination of volunteers**

Background

The Area Community Officer provides support to existing local community organisations and works with VCS organisations to support delivery of the Area Committee/Place/People Board priorities. VCAS is the Citywide infrastructure organisation for local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups. Community Chest and the CAN DO Fund are examples of small area based budgets allocated by Coalfield Area Committee. Development of SIB funded initiatives include Call for Projects, which provide an opportunity for VCS organisations to deliver projects against a brief prepared by the relevant Board. Some of the supported Community Associations receive a small grant towards running costs, this is reviewed annually.

Some of the larger VCS organisations employ community development officers or volunteer co-ordinators to support the recruitment, training and on-going support for volunteers to work specifically within their own organisation. Other organisations operating across the area, such as City Libraries, Age UK, Gentoo and Groundwork North East, provide volunteering opportunities and run different models of volunteering programmes suited to their own objectives.

The Volunteer Centre Sunderland will match individuals to organisations looking for volunteers and advise those organisations on best practice. There is no one organisation or mechanism in the Coalfield area to support and co-ordinate volunteering as a whole for the benefit of the local residents and communities. This issue has been raised on a number of occasions through Area Committee, Area VCS Networks and various locality meetings. A range of suggestions to address this priority has been discussed and the key issues attached discussed by the Board.

People Board project development (September 2015)

Increase support and co-ordination of volunteers and community organisations in the Coalfield Area

In the rapidly changing operating environment of reduced public spending, volunteering is increasing being cited as playing a key role in future public service delivery. Through volunteering, residents and service users will become partners in achieving priorities for the area. Encouraging and enabling more people to volunteer will generate multiple benefits for improved service delivery and for individual volunteers themselves. It is noted that many local organisations traditionally operated by volunteers are struggling to attract new and younger volunteers in an ageing population. A number of local organisations have made tough choices to close or reduce their service provision due to financial and resourcing gaps. More reliance and pressure is placed on volunteers as funding opportunities reduce and demands on services increase. The social value of many local voluntary organisations is regularly commended by Area Committee who agreed to make this a priority in the 2015/16 work plan.

Discussion by People Board (September 2015):

- a) Develop a cohort of Coalfield volunteers to a) work within a specific organisation in the area, to support the development of that organisation and/or b) give time on an ad hoc basis to a number of volunteering opportunities and for local activities and events such as fun days, guided walks, commemorative and celebration events (e.g. Houghton Feast, Christmas Switch on) and consultation.
- b) Increase the recognition of the contribution of volunteering to the local Coalfield community. Promotion and awareness-raising of volunteering related activity can be developed in various ways such as celebration events, social media and posters/printed materials.
- c) Develop a Volunteering Steering Group specific to the Coalfield area. The group would need to incorporate attendance or input from key organisations such as VCS Network, VCAS, Volunteer Centre, Gentoo, Age UK and Sunderland City Council and link to the Coalfield VCS Network meeting and other area based meetings.
- d) Proactively work with local organisations who make a real difference in the area to ensure they have the correct procedures and mechanisms in place to sustain their activity and recruit, support and retain volunteers.
- e) Identify, advise and support local and smaller VCS organisations on any opportunities available to them and support them to benefit from any such provision.
- f) Develop a youth social action project to encourage and support young people to take part in social action in their local community. Engaged young people remain key to the future of our communities. Youth social action is all about young people taking 'practical actions in the service of others'; this includes young people working as a team to clean up a local park, helping younger children to read, or being a young school governor. Through partnership working, support young people to make a positive contribution to their local area, while at the same time providing them with skills to develop their own characteristics, values and habits.

If Area Committee approves a sum of SIB funding to deliver a Volunteering and Community Support Project, a project brief (or more than one) would need to be developed and a Call for Projects made. Any project would need to ensure it is very focused and specifically to meet local need within the Coalfield area. It would not replace or duplicate any support currently provided by either VCAS or Volunteer Centre Sunderland and would need to work closely with all organisations to ensure the Coalfield still receive an equitable service from all partners and programmes once a new project was in operation. If more than one project is developed it would be part of the project specification that they work together to provide a comprehensive offer.

To support the delivery of the project a 'Community Capacity Fund' could also be made available to the project to allocate to local groups to enable them to continue service delivery. Criteria would be developed and any requests for the fund would come back to the People Board for consideration.

Budget requirements

- A two year volunteer and community support project is estimated at £75,000
- A Capacity Fund of £25,000 would enable the project to support groups with one-off support.
- A one year Youth Social Action project could be developed for £15,000

Coalfield Area VCS Network Meeting August 2015

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What would help your group or organisation?

Feedback

- Supporting volunteers in the Coalfield area by raising awareness of the volunteering opportunities available in all sectors. A publicity drive is needed.
- More promotion of all opportunities
- Advertise volunteering opportunities on the ad bins
- Simplify funding applications
- Make funding available for start-up funds
- The need for 3 signatories for a group puts people off
- A register of volunteers (listing skills/strengths) would help
- Co-ordination of volunteers across all groups in the area
- An awards ceremony
- Recognition of what volunteers do – promote value of volunteers
- Provide training to those managing volunteers on the Law etc..
- New ideas for new activities and help with volunteers to deliver the activities
- How to get new volunteers in Community Associations
- Face to face contact – attend committee meetings
- Volunteer co-ordinator across the area
- Pool of volunteers who can work with all organisations in the area
- Co-ordinator that is aware of services in the area and what they need
- Advertise via social media to recruit people