

## **WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE**

1<sup>st</sup> July 2021

### **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 Network**

- 3.1 In Washington, the VCS is made up of a wide range of organisations ranging from independent local branches of national charities through to small, totally voluntary, community groups. Collectively these organisations provide Washington residents with a wide range of local services, activities and opportunities and have a significant role within community life here.
- 3.2 As well as partner updates re what is happening across the area, events, opportunities etc. partners regularly attended the Network meetings to present information.
- 3.3 The Area Network partners have also contributed to and supported the SCC Let's Talk Resident Engagement Strategy, assisting with resident engagement, completing questionnaires and being involved in the Area Conversation Events to contribute to the Area Committee's emerging Neighbourhood Investment Plan

#### **4. Washington Network (AVCSN) Progress Report**

- 4.1 The Washington VCS Network has continued to meet via Microsoft Teams and has kept in regular contact sharing information and ideas.
- 4.2 The Area Network became galvanised within days after the lock down was declared and transformed their services to ensure they continued to support those in need from across the area. Whilst many centres had to close, services continued to be delivered but in a different way.
- 4.3 SNCBC have worked with the Council, CCG, Gentoo, VCS Partners and volunteers to provide support for shopping, prescriptions befriending, dog walking and many more services.
- 4.4 Network organisations were invited to apply for SCC funding to support children and families throughout the school holiday periods re holiday hunger. As well as VCS

organisations, both residents and local businesses joined forces resulting in an incredible offer for food, packed lunches and hot meals being available for those families needing help. Network members were also invited to apply for SCC 'Winter COVID' funding, more recently Covid Support/Mental Health funding and the Targeted Covid Champions funding

As the effects of lockdown ease and change, The Area Hubs are now working with those residents to implement 'Personal Pathway Plans' to determine who still requires support, and referring them either to appropriate services, the Social Prescribers, or other support projects and opportunities. Currently less than 25% of the original caseload are being supported to put the personal plans in place – the other 75% no longer require support.

- 4.5 Following significant consultation with the Area Voluntary and Community Sector Networks, a Sunderland VCS Alliance has been formed to support a strong, vibrant, and accessible VCS which both influences and supports delivery of key services in the city. The Alliance is sector-led through the five Area VCS Networks and financially supported by Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and Gentoo, alongside external funding secured via the ESIF Community Led Local Development Programme. The Alliance is building upon the importance and strengths of area-based VCS structures and networks, increasing capacity in the sector wherever possible, to support the delivery of the ambitions of the Sunderland City Plan, Neighbourhood Investment Plans, Sunderland Community Wealth Building Strategy and the Community Led Local Development Strategy.
- 4.6 The last virtual Network meeting was held on the 8<sup>th</sup> June and 14 organisations were represented.
- The network received a presentation about a new 'digital employment tool' from the Labour Xchange
  - The network also received a presentation updating with regards to the Community Wealth Strategy and the VCS Alliance.
  - 4 of the Community Support Workers will be in post by week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> June – the ACDL requested all organisations to consider the level of support they might require from the new Community Support Worker in order to draft an action plan for the Washington worker
  - The meeting was also updated on progress re the Washington Area Committee Neighbourhood Investment Plan
  - Next Washington Area VCS meeting rescheduled for July 2021 hopefully 'in person' at the Washington Millennium Centre, dependent on Government guidelines and easing of restrictions

## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1 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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