

REPORT OF WASHINGTON AREA COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regards to the Washington Area Community & 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 sector 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 informing Members of recent activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector
- 2.3 The delegates will also represent the Network at the VCS Alliance meetings.

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 VCS groups and organisations. Collectively these organisations provide Washington residents with a wide range of local services, activities and opportunities and have a significant role within community life.
- 3.2 As well as partner updates re what is happening across the area, events, opportunities etc., partners regularly attend the networks to present information, consult and to offer numerous opportunities to develop partner approaches.
- 3.3 The Area Network partners 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 Neighbourhood Investment Plans

4. Washington Network (AVCSN) Progress Report

- 4.1 The Washington Network has continued to meet via Microsoft Teams and has kept in regular contact sharing information, opportunities and ideas.
- 4.2 The Area Network galvanised within days after the lock downs were declared and transformed their services to ensure they continued to support those in need across the area. Services continued to be delivered but in a different way.
- 4.3 SNCBC has led the Washington Area Hub and worked with the Council, CCG, Gentoo, VCS partners and volunteers to provide support for shopping, prescriptions, befriending, dog walking and many more services – dependent on the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 4.4 Network organisations were invited to apply to 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, Covid support re Mental Health funds and the Targeted Covid Champions funding.
As the effects of lockdowns eased, the Area Hubs continued to support those residents still needing support and are implementing 'Personal Pathway Plans' to determine appropriate referrals.

- 4.5 Following significant consultation with the Area VCS 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 SCC, Gentoo and Sunderland CCG, alongside external funding secured via the ESIF Community Led Local Development Programme (CLLD). The Alliance is building on the importance and strengths of the 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, the Neighbourhood Investment Plans. The Sunderland Community Wealth Building Strategy, and the Community Led Local Development Strategy.
- 4.6 Washington Network has met twice since the last Committee meeting and report. At the meeting of the held 20th July the Network received an update on the VCS Alliance - the 'Let's Talk VCS' Event is 7th October, VCS Alliance Website up and running and the Washington CSW now in place and in attendance today. Denise gave a brief introduction and summary of her role. In addition, the meeting received a presentation about the services available as part of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) which is part of the Sunderland Psychological Wellbeing Service.

Partner updates:

- Area Hub volunteers were still delivering services to residents
- New 'Friends of Usworth park' established
- Community Opportunities will be delivering the WAC funded 'Positive activities' programmes in all Wards throughout the summer holidays
- DWP not fully reopened yet with only 10 – 2pm sessions available to more vulnerable clients. Washington JC was also now identified as a 'Safe Place' for victims of domestic abuse.
- Washington Forge Rotary provided an update on their Youth awards and competitions, leadership award, and Swimathon and Defibrillator programme
- Social Prescribers were now getting out into the local community and establishing key relationships, partnerships etc.
- CAB provided information and posters on the services they provide

The meeting of the 7th September received the following updates:

- VCS Alliance event – 88 were booked to attend.
- WISP project was working face to face at St Michael's and providing telephone support to WCFP
- Washington MIND are updating and reviewing wellbeinginfo.org
- Washington Support Group for Men are meeting again with a range of courses underway and planned over the next year
- VCS Support Project updated with regards to Area Hub volunteers, supporting volunteers at Bowes Railway, helping address Social isolation, Friends of Usworth Park and events in the Park
- ACW updates the meeting on the Creative Age group and the start of the Creative Me initiative – 1 group for young people and one for adults using art to help with mental health' ACW is also working with the PCN VCS Steering Group
- Debra Grosse updated re Social Prescribing work
- PCN VCS Steering Group continuing to expand its activities to provide opportunities for patients
- Building Blocks Day Centre making Uniform Drive a permanent offer at the centre. Aimee also offered the community room at the centre for Network meetings

- Mary Evans of Holy Trinity to present more detail at the next meeting of how the group is planning to extend its community remit and provide activities and services for residents and not just those attending the church services. The volunteers are keen to be considered a community group and build positive relationships with organisations and partners

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington AVCS.

Contact: 1. Sylvia Copley. Area Network Representative
Email s.copley@shineyadvice.org.uk Tel: 0191 3856687

2. Shirley Gillum. Area Network Representative
Email: shirleygillum@communityopportunities.co.uk Tel: 0191 5373231