

# Minutes

## Northumberland VCS Consortium

10.00am, Friday 26 February 2010  
The Round House, Age Concern, Ashington.

### Present:

Rodney James	Chair
David Francis	CAN
Lesley Hill	Northumbria Youth
Julia Lyford	NCDN
Thom Bradley	CVABV
Georgie Cruddas	SixtyEightyThirty/NSP Executive
Charles Tremeer	Volunteering Northumberland
Mike Dungworth	CVA Blyth Valley/NSP Board
John McGough	NCDN/NSP Board
Moira McFarlane	CABx
Bob Langley	CAN
Carol Southam	VoiCeS
Christine Bone	GONE

### In attendance:

George Courtice	Sector Development Officer
Lynda Watson	Compact & Contracts Officer
Sue Andrew	Minute-taker

### Apologies:

Sandi Downing	Carers Northumberland
Anne Lyall	Volunteering Northumberland
John Maude	North Country Leisure
Peter Robinson	Church of England
Julie Davenport	Northumbria Daybreak/NSP Executive
Cath Carnaby	WHAC
Jill Robson	Job Centre Plus
Vanessa Proudlock	FONDT

## 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair informed those assembled of Sheila McGuckin's untimely death on 23 February and a one minute silence was held. Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 September 2009 and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

Min 5: Groundwork: GC had approached Groundwork to join the Consortium and Angus Robson had subsequently attended the December meeting.

Safer Northumberland Partnership: Sheila McGuckin sat on the strategy group of this partnership on behalf of the Consortium. **This would need to be looked at in future.**

Transport Group of City Region: It was reported that Jeff Armstrong of NCDN/Link attends this group.

Min 7 (i) Capacitybuilders: Although still very uncertain the future was looking more positive. Capacitybuilders was hopeful of making a good case to retain funding post April 2011.

Min 7(vi) Personalisation of services: Fiona Horsman had been approached by GC and is keen to take up the offer to attend the next Consortium meeting.

It was noted that the Development Fund was to develop the process of personalisation of care and it was hoped to set up a health/care providers network in order to be involved in a more collaborative role. The NCDN bid to set this up had resulted in a successful grant for £82k for one year from April. This would cover some of the costs of backfill, support for the merging of organisations, training for information and advice and two part-time workers. A meeting of VCS Health and Social Care Providers is to be set up in the near future.

### Meeting of 18 December

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

Q3 of Table discussions: It was agreed that it was important to

## Action

encourage the involvement of more networks in the Consortium. GC mentioned the Disability & Deaf Network and the Community Buildings Consortia. He suggested the presence of Social Enterprise Northumberland might also be helpful. There were some misgivings over SEN as it is a unit within the County Council. It was proposed that a one-off seminar might clarify ideas about what was and what was not a social enterprise. It was noted that organisations which are involved in Social Enterprise would include most VCS Consortium members. **GC to compile a list** from various sources, discuss with other members and get together at a future meeting.

It was also noted that, in due course, a faith network should also be invited.

The Survey Monkey before Christmas provided very valuable information and was a cost effective way of determining opinion.

**This will be posted on the website.**

More organisations are needed to be included on the web-based database particularly those based in the south east of the county.

### **3. Update on relations with NCC**

As a result of Wednesday's full Council meeting, the cuts planned for the VCS were reduced from £300k to £250k. A £50k contingency will be available to those organisations which have slipped through the net. In addition three allocations of £10k – one for each of the three Areas - will be available to individuals. The Area Committee Chairs and Deputy Leader will oversee this.

A meeting had been held to discuss infrastructure support and an allocation had been agreed between the eight organisations, (CAN, WCVS, CVABV, NCDN, VoiCeS, Northumbria Youth, BVDF and Adapt) for a period of one year with the same total of £354,190 agreed for the following year.

**It was proposed and agreed to set up a group to look at how the sector relates to NCC**, especially in terms of monitoring and evaluation across the board as well as developing a common commissioning framework across all service departments. VCS involvement on deliberations on the extra £50k could be used as a building block to expand on the link between NCC and the Consortium. The distinctions between giving, investing and shopping were by no means clear and needed further discussion.

**GC**

Carol Southam had been invited to a meeting with NCC's Children's services. VoiCeS will be taking challenges and solutions to that meeting as it appears to be only about the delivery of contracted services.

It was noted that a 'carve-up' of cash was necessary in the short term but there was the opportunity to be proactive and to develop links across the whole of NCC, building on the good relationships with Janice Rose and Kirsten Francis. There was a need to build-up a strong and convincing evidence base to demonstrate how the sector has brought about change. The Consortium has an important role to play in this.

The proposed group would be open to those support organisations which expressed an interest. In addition Lynda Watson and Bob Langley are keen to be involved in any group looking at the relationships between the Council and the sector.

**George Courtice to check with Andrew Gooding and Vanessa Proudlock as to the current status of FONDT.**

GC

There was no detail available as to the planned purpose of the allocation of the £66k allocated to Youth Services. Until recently it was understood that this was earmarked for Youth Clubs but this no longer appears to be certain. There seemed to be a vacuum of understanding when it comes to some middle managers. **This needs to be an agenda item at our next meeting with the Council's Executive.** There is a perception in Northumberland that two large high spending departments - Children's Services and Adult Social Care – are outside Partnership's influence.

Some services like victim support and domestic abuse have been subject to the largest cuts (30%) and the commissioning agent, Safer Northumberland, has not indicated how it plans to manage this. **We should monitor the impact of this cut.**

It was noted that there were instances of part-Council funded (often less than 50%) VCS projects which were having 100% of their outputs counted towards NCC outputs.

**4. Reports back:**

NSP Executive/ Board: It was reported that Tuesday's Executive meeting was poorly attended but that it appeared that the members genuinely wanted to look at the structure across the county. The Work in Progress produced was useful. It was noted that Janice Rose will be

holding the fort when Stuart Lawson goes in a few weeks time and that, as staff leave, they are not being replaced. There was a strong suspicion that the NSP had now been totally absorbed into the Council and that the best way forward would be to concentrate on building successful partnerships at local level rather than concentrating on the top and hoping they will filter down.

Action points:

- Be more proactive on agendas for NSP Board meetings.
- Look at other opportunities for influence
- Make sure successful partnership working is publicised.

Thematic partnerships: There were issues with capacity in sitting on these Partnerships as well as an impression that they were not always designed for getting things done/changed. All were invited to respond by today's deadline for the consultation over the draft Economic Strategy 2010-15.

FACT: Meetings lead largely on safeguarding and commissioning. Beginning to get responses to questions posed, deciding on where the sector has most to gain and a willingness to accept that some areas will fall by the wayside. Want to deliver training to front line workers.

Area Partnerships: Elections for Chair and Vice Chair will take place at next week's South-East meeting. The North is now being populated, a chair elected although that has not been without its problems. The West Partnership is lagging behind a bit and has not yet identified representatives from the VCS.

VCS Learning Consortium: Despite an informal learning event having been cancelled, this Consortium continues to grow. It has had a Stage 2 Modernisation grant awarded from Capacitybuilders which needs to be spent before the end of March. Currently trying to pull together a unified Steering Group to link employability and learning skills. This will probably meet on 8 March at NCDN in Ashington. Linked bids are looking more likely.

Volunteering Northumberland: Mental Health volunteers were being encouraged and there was event at the Holiday Inn on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is a need to convince NCC that this service as well as the Consortium merits future funding after April 2011.

It was noted that when looking at the 2-year settlement, we were strongly advised not to hold money back from 2010-11 to help fund additional needs in 2011-12.

Compact: The Compact magazine was distributed. It was noted that the

new National Compact is now available and there is a proposal for Northumberland to mirror it and to convert our codes into guidance. It was also noted that the resolution/dispute procedure needed to be revisited in view of the changed relationship of the NSP to the Council. There was a view that the Compact should be used more as a carrot than a stick. Invitations were offered for interest in becoming Compact Champions.

## **5 Website update**

Over the last few weeks much work has been done on the website [www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk) to update the material. Organisations are urged to remove out-of-date material and add new information or to contact George Courtice or Lynda Watson to do so on their behalf.

## **6 Next meetings**

It had been agreed that the May meeting be changed to the 14<sup>th</sup>.

14 May – Hexham, Tynedale Function Rooms

10 September – Alnwick, St James's Centre

10 December – Ashington, The Round House, Age Concern

all to be held at 10am.

## **7 Any other business**

NCDN is running a programme of activities and events, including training for middle managers in the public sector, with the one for Northumberland scheduled towards the end of March.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.30pm