

*This bulletin is produced by the Voice for the VCS Project which is a project of Derbyshire's Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Consortium, 3D, and is supported by Big Lottery Funding.*

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## Editor's note

**Hello everyone,**

Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> issue of the VCS LAA bulletin, out a little later than planned. The Voice project has been busy organising a series of Election Question Time events around the county. I also took some annual leave before Easter and before I knew it we were into April! The Voice Project is hosted by Rural Action Derbyshire (formerly Derbyshire Rural Community Council) which has just overhauled its entire IT systems giving me a new email address but also a few technical problems. If you have sent me an email recently and have not had a reply, please re-send it as RAD have been ironing out the initial wrinkles in the system and we should now be up and running again properly. I hope you find the bulletin interesting, as usual I'm happy to hear your comments or for you to forward all or any part of the bulletin to your friends, colleagues and volunteers.

**Claire Thornber,**

**Voice for the VCS Project Officer.**

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**Total Place** is a new initiative to watch out for. Like the LAA, it aims to bring key public sector partners together to look at issues which affect the area and cross the boundaries of individual organisations. But Total Place goes one step further. With increasing demand on public services and imminent reductions in public spending, Total Place Pilots in 13 areas across the UK have a range of partners looking at how they can work together better to make services more efficient and ultimately save money.

Whilst finding ways to be more efficient with public money isn't anything new, this initiative is part of the Treasury's Operational Efficiency Programme. The OEP released a report alongside the 2009 budget which said that the Government could make £9billion in 'annual savings from back office operations and IT, collaborative procurement, asset management and sales, property, local incentives etc.' The pilots have focused on particular areas of work such as health, housing and crime, health and wellbeing of the Under 5's and tackling alcohol and drug abuse.

Derbyshire has agreed to work on 3 pilots; Challenging Families, Provision of Advice Services and Older People and progress will be reported to the Derbyshire Partnership Forum in June this year.

## Election Fever!

During April Voice for the VCS organised a series of Election Question Time events so that frontline voluntary and community groups could meet with the parliamentary candidates for their constituency. They heard how the political parties would work with the sector if they came into power and asked questions on matters relating to their campaigns or service users.

Events took place in

- Chesterfield
- South Derbyshire
- North East Derbyshire
- Mid Derbyshire
- High Peak
- Derbyshire Dales

Approximately 200 people attended and asked questions about issues like about the future of funding to the VCS in the face of public spending cuts, climate change, child poverty, services for people with mental illness, learning disabilities and our aging population. You can see video footage of the event in the High Peak by following this link.

<http://highpeakcvs.org.uk/Election2010/>

For those of you who didn't get to the debates, Voice will try to summarise the main party's future plans for working with the sector. Some of this is taken from a NAVCA circulation and you can download the full story from

<http://www.navca.org.uk/news/electionarticles.htm>

## Labour

The Labour Party is quick to point out that Government investment in the sector has 'more than doubled since 1997; from £5.5 billion to £12 billion now'. They have also introduced The Compact which aims to improve working relationships between the public and the voluntary sectors.

They go on to highlight 5 ways in which this can be built on,

- Defending and advocating for our campaigning role
- Increasing Social Investment including plans for a Social Investment bank which will make use of £75 million of funds released from dormant accounts
- Continuing to invest in the frontline to build its capacity to enable delivery of public services
- Review the governments grant-making processes to make them simpler and speedier

- Increasing the opportunities to volunteer and support those organisations that help communities play a part

## Conservatives

The Conservatives want people to 'feel a greater sense of their own responsibility and power to make a difference'. David Cameron said 'There is such a thing as Society; it is just not the same as the State'. They will introduce a *community right to buy* with local people and organisations having first refusal to take over public amenities for public benefit. They go on to highlight 3 ways they will improve the operating environment for the VCS,

- Reduce regulation - including the bureaucracy around Gift Aid and improving the effectiveness of VCS infrastructure agencies, like CVS
- Create a social investment bank and inspire people to give more time and money, working closer with business and the public sector to promote volunteering and introducing a National Citizen Service for Young People aged 16
- Develop a fair deal on grants - reforming the Big Lottery Fund to give 100% of the funds to the 'social and community sector', lengthening contract terms and reviewing commissioning and procurement processes

## Liberal Democrats

The Lib Dems recognise that with so many out of work 'voluntary organisations are seeing demand for their services sky-rocket. Yet at the same time, increasing numbers of people are becoming volunteers to learn new skills and make themselves more attractive to employers'. They see that this makes it more important than ever for government to work with the sector to ensure it gets the support it needs.

They outline 3 ways they plan to do this,

- Review the way government funds the third sector, looking at administration and whether more funds can be pushed to the 'frontline'
- Make it simpler for frontline groups to compete for public sector contracts
- Encourage schools to teach the value of volunteering and to organise and promote opportunities, work with business and the public sector to get involved with local organisations

## Countywide VCS website – promote your group

If you are a member of your local CVS or get support from another kind of infrastructure agency like Southern Derbyshire Voluntary Sector Mental Health Forum or NDVA then your contact details will be held on a database by them. They will use these to send you newsletters, funding information, keep you up to date with policies affecting your work or your service users or just get in touch. There is also an increasing proliferation of databases held by public sector organisations, like the PCT and the various departments of county and district councils, about voluntary and community groups.

3D, which is a partnership of all these infrastructure agencies in Derbyshire are debating whether it would be better to store all this information in one place. Your contact details would still be updated by your local infrastructure agency and you could say whether you wanted your information only available to them or whether you were happy to share that with statutory agencies. Information about your group could also feed on to a website which could be viewed by members of the public so that people searching the internet for a particular service could find and contact your organisation or group for help.

This would be particularly helpful for groups which work in the health and social care sector. You may be aware that the way that social services are provided and paid for is changing. People who receive those services will be assessed and given a budget to buy the services they need, rather than that being decided by the Adult Care department. This gives people more choice over what help they receive and who provides it. Groups that deliver this kind of support service will need to promote it and people looking to buy a service will need to be able to find information about all the

services, including voluntary and community groups, so you can begin to see the value of having this information available to the public via a searchable website.

There are other benefits - you'll only be asked to update your details by one organisation saving you time, you could more easily find and contact other groups in the county which could help your service users or your organisation, you could indicate the kind of information you're interested to receive so you don't get inundated with information that isn't relevant to you and you would only receive it once rather than from a number of different sources - saving paper or inbox space!

Infrastructure agencies in Staffordshire have set up a similar system and you can see their public website at [www.communitiestogether.org.uk](http://www.communitiestogether.org.uk) While it took a long time to set up, organisations in Staffordshire have found it very useful and it has also meant that they now have a better understanding of the services that voluntary and community groups provide, the amount of work that volunteers contribute and the level of funding that the VCS brings into the county on top of that drawn down through statutory partners. This provides a strong base to ensure that the sector continues to be supported despite impending public sector cuts.

While 3D seeks funds to set up and run a countywide database, it is still very early days and the debate is still open. Voice for the VCS would very much like to know how frontline groups feel about it. If you have view, whether it's for or against, please get in touch with Claire Thornber using the contact details on page 1.

## NI 7 Update

Derbyshire's Local Area Agreement includes a commitment to the voluntary and community sector that the Derbyshire Partnership Forum (which includes all the major players – the county and district councils, Police, PCT etc.) will create an environment that we can thrive in. This is measured by National Indicator 7 (NI7) and the baselines for improvement have been set by a national survey that was done in Autumn 2008.

Back in November 2008 Voice for the VCS organised an event which was attended by the public and the voluntary sectors, both frontline and infrastructure agencies. The event created the opportunity for an open cross sector debate on what changes are needed to create better operating environment for the VCS. Issues were raised under four broad headings;

- Funding relationships
- Support available to frontline groups
- Ability to influence decisions
- Partnership working

Voice compiled a report from the event which was worked into an action plan. You can find this at:

[www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Voice\\_Project/Events](http://www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Voice_Project/Events)

Lorna Wallace, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector rep, took the action plan to the Culture Board for approval in September 09. The Culture Board is responsible for overseeing the delivery of NI 7. This may seem a long process but remember that the boards only meet 4 times per year! Once the plan was approved a Steering group was established to ensure that work began on the action points of the plan.

The Steering group is made up of representatives from the County Councils

cultural and policy departments, a district council representative (Bolsover), VCS infrastructure reps from Bolsover CVP, Derbyshire Dales CVS and Volunteer Centres Derbyshire together with two representatives from frontline organisations who have been involved with the process since the initial event.

This Steering group has identified 3 priorities for action,

- To establish a Funders Forum to address a range of issues around funding and monitoring
- To increase mutual understanding between the sectors
- To find out more about Derbyshire's frontline groups by completing some local research

Work has begun in all these areas – draft Terms of Reference have been drawn up and funders are being invited to join a funders' forum. This will be a strategic group which local funding advisors will be invited to join in order to voice opinions on your behalf. Voice has offered to deliver free training sessions to public sector officers to give them a better understanding of the range and scope of the sector as well as create a greater awareness of the massive contribution made by the VCS across the county.

You can keep your eye on what happens at this group by reading the minutes at

[www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Derbyshire\\_LAA/Culture\\_Board](http://www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Derbyshire_LAA/Culture_Board)

The national survey will be repeated in Autumn 2010 so it will be interesting to see statistically whether organisations feel NI7 has made a difference to them. Voice will be organising another event to update on NI7 progress in November when you'll be able to make your comments in person.

## The LAA Headlines

**Health and Wellbeing Partnership** Our 3D rep was unfortunately not able to make the last meeting on March 1<sup>st</sup> but has since had a 'catch up' meeting with James Matthews (Assistant Director of Strategy and Commissioning within the Adult Care department of Derbyshire County Council). They had a conversation about how they can best show the massive impact and contribution of all the voluntary and community groups working in the field of health and social care, especially the work which is funded by the county council. Voice for the VCS would also like to see this work given greater recognition so will meet with NDVA and the Southern Derbyshire Health and Social Care Forum to discuss how best to do this.

**Culture Board** Met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March and discussed NI 7 after a presentation from Lorna Wallace on the progress to date (see article in this bulletin). While central government will measure the LSPs performance by repeating the National Survey in Autumn this year the Culture Board are concerned about how they will show the impact of the work carried out by the Steering Group and whether this has improved the environment for frontline groups.

**Children's Trust** Last met on the 18<sup>th</sup> March. Jo Smith raised awareness that much of the funding for early intervention projects is coming to a close at the end of March 2011 so the VCS organisations delivering preventative services need to know as soon as possible whether funding will continue so that they can plan how those services will survive beyond 2011. The Trust's priorities have been highlighted as increasing breast feeding, reducing obesity, narrowing the gap between high and low achievers, reducing incidents of bullying and improving integrated working. A conference for VCS organisations working with children will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, at County Hall.

More info at [http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/Flyer%20and%20Booking%20Form\\_tcm9-134537.pdf](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/Flyer%20and%20Booking%20Form_tcm9-134537.pdf)

**Safer Communities Partnership** Met on the 24<sup>th</sup> February and heard a presentation from Robert Gent, secretary to the Culture Board about how NI7 is a 'cross cutting' indicator and needs the support of all the LAA Boards to ensure that work doesn't take place in isolation. Discussions will take place on how to link up.

**Transformational Partnership** Met on the 29<sup>th</sup> March and confirmed that funding had been agreed which will contribute to the costs of a countywide Financial inclusion project. Amongst other initiatives, this hopes to make credit unions available to all those who need them. This project will be managed by Rural Action Derbyshire. For more information please contact Emma Bates by email on [e.bates@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](mailto:e.bates@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk)

**Sustainable Communities Board** Met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and received reports from all its sub-groups. These mostly related to performance against National Indicators but the Economic Partnership report noted that, as of this month, funding for Adult Skills and Training will transfer to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). While it will focus on skills for employment, the agency will also be responsible for funding informal learning, offender learning and learning for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. If you previously received funding via the LSC you will need to forge new relationships with the SFA.

If you would like to read the minutes and papers from any of these meetings contact Claire Thornber, details on Page 1, or download from [www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Derbyshire\\_LAA](http://www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Derbyshire_LAA)

## Calling all environmental organisations!

Back in March the County Council hosted a Community Climate Change Conference for community organisations and individuals wanting to learn more about the different ways that they can reduce their own CO2 emissions. The conference had a ‘let’s learn from each other’ approach with workshops being led by community groups with experience and knowledge to share. Those who attended said that one of the best things about the day was meeting other groups and making useful contacts for the future.

The Voice for the VCS would like to build on this and coordinate a countywide **VCS Climate Change network** for any organisation or individual that has an interest in the Climate Change agenda. Joe Dugdale, VCS Climate Change rep at the LAA, supports the network which will also help him to better represent the VCS at this strategic level. While Joe is in contact with many groups via his work with the Peak District Sustainable Energy Group, there is a lot of activity happening outside of this area and a VCS Climate Change network would keep him in touch with that and enable him to better promote the work already happening in the community.

More than 25 organisations who attended the conference expressed an interest in forming a network and Voice has arranged the first meeting for the **8<sup>th</sup> June**, venue to be confirmed. The network will be led by its members and those that attend this first meeting will be able to say what they would like the network to do and how it will do it. For more information please get in touch with Claire Thornber, contact details on page 1.

## More LAA training dates!

Last year, Voice delivered a series of free training sessions around the county. If you didn’t make the first sessions in your area, don’t miss the opportunity to understand the background to the LAA and how you can use it to show stakeholders, management committee members and funders how your work fits in with Derbyshire’s ‘bigger picture’. Comments from last year’s evaluation included,

**“...really well presented, covering the topic and delivered for all levels.”**  
**“The clearest explanation of Local Strategic Partnerships/LAAs yet!”**

Unravel the LAA mystery! We will look at:

- **How Local Strategic Partnerships and the Local Area Agreement works in Derbyshire**
- **How the voluntary and community sector is involved**
- **National Indicators and your organisation**
- **How the money works**

**The next session will be held at The ABC centre, Bakewell – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October from 10am – 12.00pm including free lunch and refreshments**

Contact **Neil Moulden at Derbyshire Dales CVS on [neil@ddcvs.org.uk](mailto:neil@ddcvs.org.uk)**  
**or by phone 01629 810901**

Voice is also available to visit your organisation and talk to your staff or management committee on a one to one basis.

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Voice\\_Project](http://www.3Dsupport.org.uk/Voice_Project)

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