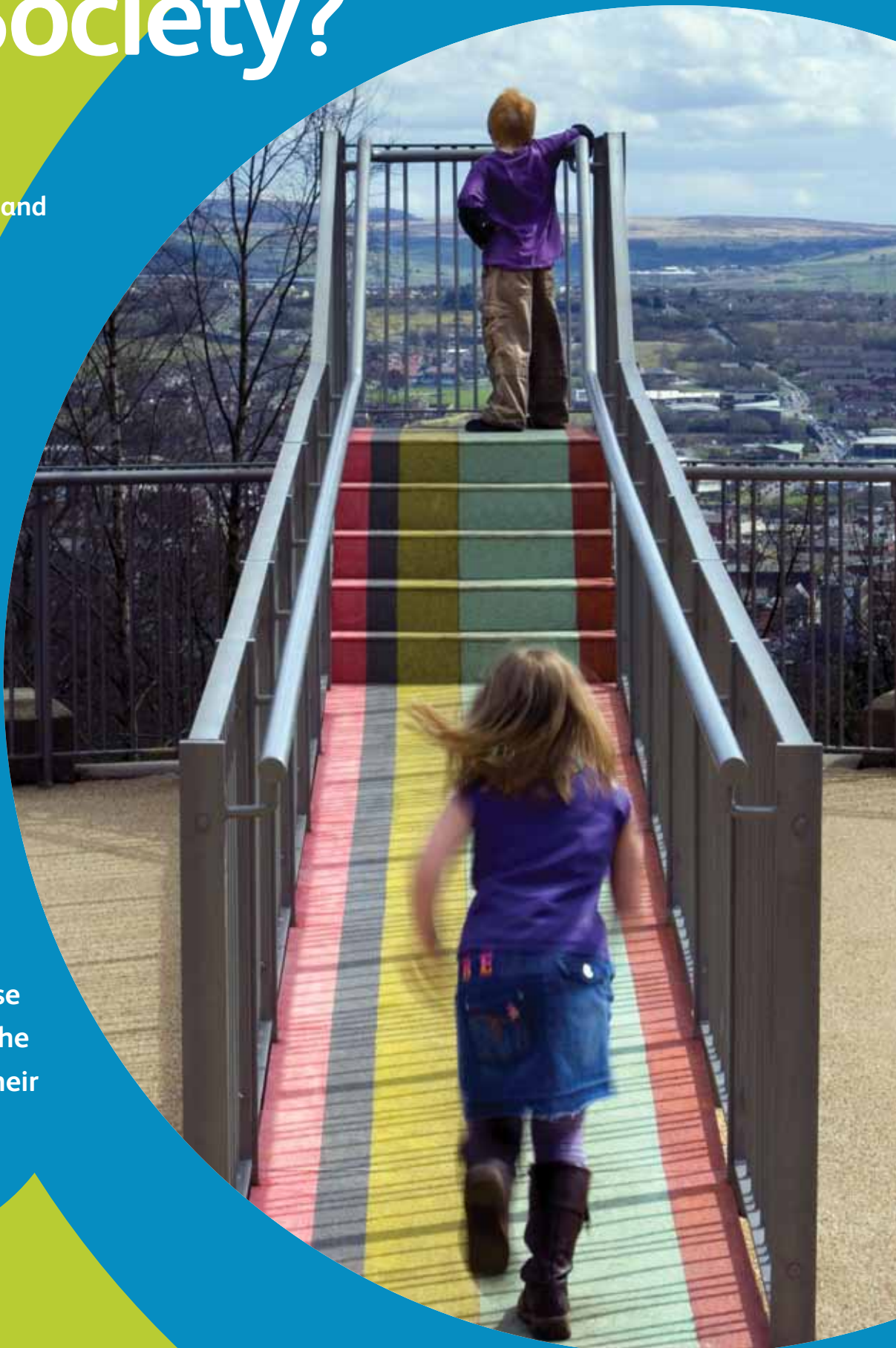


Who's Listening to the Big Society?

2011

Isabel Livingstone and
Kate Cotton

How social purpose
organisations in the
South West get their
voices heard



About us

South West Forum is the voice for the 70,000 social purpose organisations in the South West. We support groups to improve their effectiveness, maintain their independence, be collaborative and have real influence.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all the people and organisations who have participated in the survey and case studies, who are listed in the Appendix. We would also like to thank Big Lottery Fund for funding the research through our Stronger Voice Greater Influence project.

The report was researched and written by Isabel Livingstone and Kate Cotton.

Access this publication on your smartphone by scanning this QR code



Copyright: South West Forum, July 2011

South West Forum
Unit A1, Phase 1
University of Exeter
Rennes Drive
Exeter EX4 4RN

01392 247901
admin@southwestforum.org.uk
www.southwestforum.org.uk

Image credits

Cover image, page 6 and page 10: Courtesy of Sustainable Communities Excellence Network (www.scen.org.uk)

Pages 5, 9, 21 (top), 23, 24, 27, 29, 31, 45, 51, 53, 57, 59 and 61: Seb Chandler (www.sebchandlerphotography.com)

Page 38: Courtesy of Deaf Action. Photographer: Paul Belmonte for Deaf Action (www.deafaction.org) Deaf Action is a deaf-led charity, established in 1835 to work together for an equal and better future for all deaf people.

Contents

Summary Findings	4	Case studies:	
Introduction	11	What's Bugging You?	
How strong is the voice of the social purpose sector?	18	Creative ways to engage with voluntary and community organisations in Dorset.....	12
What difference does the sector's voice make?	22	Strong and vibrant voluntary sector representation	
How inclusive is the voice of the social purpose sector?	30	The Gloucestershire VCS Assembly model.....	26
What does the future hold?	48	Models of equality representation – what works?	
How are spending cuts affecting involvement in decision making?	54	Voscur and the Bristol Partnership Equalities Action Group.....	40
Conclusions and recommendations	62	Voice and Echo in Wiltshire:	
Further resources	64	A new way of working with with local councillors.....	44
Appendix 1 – Survey questions	65	The Care Forum:	
Appendix 2 – List of participants	68	Illustrating the Value of Specialist Infrastructure for Health and Social Care.....	50
		Voluntary Sector Forum on a shoestring:	
		Success in North Somerset.....	58

Who's listening to the Big Society?

Summary findings

This report is about the relationship between social purpose and public sector organisations. In particular it looks at how social purpose organisations have a voice and are represented on decision-making bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships. It also explores the participation of often marginalised groups such as equality groups and small volunteer-led organisations. It includes case studies of particularly creative or successful ways of helping social purpose organisations influence decision makers.

South West Forum has carried out this short study to find out how strong and inclusive is the voice of the social purpose sector. It is particularly important at the moment because funding cuts mean that support for social purpose organisations to have a voice is declining. This study presents a snapshot of how the voice and representation of social purpose organisations was organised and resourced in 2010-11, and how that is changing as public spending cuts start to have an impact.

In December 2010 South West Forum sent out a questionnaire to the main infrastructure organisation that co-ordinates voice and representation in each of the 15 upper tier local authorities in the South West of England. In addition, six organisations were contacted further to develop case studies to highlight particularly creative and successful examples in which social purpose organisations have influenced decision-makers.

The surveys were completed during the 2010-2011 financial year and as such echo a period of uncertainty. Indeed, whilst the report was being written the infrastructure partnership for Somerset was facing complete closure due to severe county spending cuts.

Benefits of involvement in decision-making

Our survey and case studies indicated many examples of the positive effects of involving social purpose organisations in public decision-making.

- All organisations questioned said they had social purpose representatives working on their Local Strategic Partnership at both board and thematic level.
- As a direct result of the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly's work with children and young people Gloucestershire County Council has learned more from the sector about good practice in Safeguarding (protecting and promoting children and young people's welfare) and has updated its own procedures and policies.
- Bournemouth CVS challenged approximately £200k of cuts to children and young people's services and as a result the cuts did not take place.
- Poole CVS said it has had successes from developing a culture of dialogue, partnership work and joint decision making with the public sector. He quoted a statutory colleague, Nick Wharam, Strategic Planning and Commissioning Manager of the Borough of Poole, who said: "Representatives of the voluntary sector on key planning forums ... have brought challenge to statutory partners, helped bring a unique perspective of service user and community views and helped the wider network of voluntary organisations understand opportunities."
- Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, through the Local Area Agreement, managed to save £1m of cuts to the social purpose sector during the government's initial £6bn spending cuts in 2010.



Creative and effective ways to involve social purpose organisations in decision-making

We found many creative and effective methods used to help social purpose organisations to have a voice and be represented in public decision-making.

■ As part of the Dorset Voice project Dorset Community Action initiated a very creative bug postcard campaign to help social purpose organisations to voice their concerns and issues – particularly smaller groups who don't have the time or interest to attend lots of meetings. The success of this campaign has continued with banner postcards and the "Little Book of Influence" to signpost people to decision-makers.

■ On a shoestring budget Voluntary Action North Somerset has held hugely successful Voluntary Sector Forum meetings, with many speakers from statutory bodies "queuing up" to speak at them.

■ In Wiltshire the Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium developed a unique way to use a discussion-based

empowerment tool with town and parish councillors – to help build capacity and influence decision-making. After the training one of the councillors said: "It makes us, as a town council, think about community involvement – are we doing as much as we could to reach out and take on board what they say and how we validate what they are saying?"

■ Voscur in Bristol has demonstrated how with thought to the process you can achieve a great model of equalities representation. It now supports a truly representative Equalities Action Group to challenge statutory decisions.

■ The Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS has been involved at many levels of public decision making, running as a mirror to the county's Local Strategic Partnership.

■ The Care Forum has many social purpose representatives on Health and Social Care boards across Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset who have initiated changes to statutory decisions.



Much more to be done to make representation inclusive

Survey respondents were asked to rate the involvement in voluntary sector forums and assemblies of often marginalised groups including disabled people's organisations, Gypsy and Traveller groups and migrant workers' groups. They were asked to rate the involvement of these groups from 'not involved' to 'very involved' – at executive level or on project boards. The results were quite varied across different groups, and the survey indicated that the groups that have least involvement in voluntary sector forums and assemblies are:

- Asylum seeker and refugee groups – though in some cases they may be represented by Black and Minority Ethnic organisations more generally.
- Gypsies and Travellers' organisations
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender organisations
- Migrant workers' organisations
- Women's organisations

Those groups that were reported to have higher levels of involvement are still often excluded from decision-making, and may themselves report barriers that were not identified in this survey.

...it is the responsibility of voluntary sector forums and assemblies to ensure that they are inclusive of marginalised groups within the sector so that everybody's voice can be heard.

In some cases equality groups may be involved in decision making through separate forums from mainstream social purpose organisations, for example through a public sector equality scrutiny group run by the local authority. Nevertheless it is the responsibility of voluntary sector forums and assemblies to ensure that they are inclusive of marginalised groups within the sector so that everybody's voice can be heard.

Most of the organisations questioned were facing tough decisions, redundancies and even, in the case of Somerset, total closure.

When asked what steps had been taken to make the sector's voice more inclusive to marginalised groups respondents shared many useful ideas for widening participation including:

- using a variety of ways to communicate;
- making meetings and events more accessible;
- supporting or setting up equality networks;
- doing equality impact assessments;
- accessing funding for specific equality projects; and
- tailoring contact with groups to accommodate specific needs.

Uncertain future

This report was compiled during a particularly difficult time of spending cuts and changes to the social purpose sector. Most of the organisations questioned were facing tough decisions, redundancies and even, in the case of Somerset, total closure. It was felt that the voice and representation element of their work was being particularly badly hit.

Although all who replied said they had enjoyed strong representation on their Local Strategic Partnerships, as these partnerships are being changed it is felt that the social purpose sector is not being allowed such a strong involvement in the newly emerging decision-making structures. Health and Wellbeing Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships are being set up, often with little involvement of social purpose organisations. Involvement on Local Enterprise Partnerships is worryingly low in many areas, as indicated in a

separate forthcoming report by South West Forum and RISE.

Even the Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, which is often held up nationally as a good example of engagement, is facing a huge 75% cut in its representation funding. Whereas previously the VCS Assembly ran a mirror system to the county's LSP, the Gloucestershire Conference, now that Conference is being radically slimmed down. Already a new Leadership Group, which excludes the social purpose sector, has been created.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said: "Reductions in funding and stripping away of formal partnership structures means that voluntary and community sector influence will be less about representation and more about 'specialist advisor' or involvement." Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, expressed difficulty in using opportunities to influence when there is so much change happening across all public sectors.

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, hoped that emerging structures, particularly in health, might provide more opportunities for social purpose representation than the strategic partnerships. She said: "We need a clear message nationally outlining that good practice will be to include voluntary sector representation on these boards – GP consortia, HealthWatch, Local Enterprise Partnerships etc – and that this representation needs infrastructure support behind it."

When questioned on the 'Big Society' many respondents expressed a sense that government or local authorities were using the concept to push through more cuts to the social purpose sector and deliver services more cheaply.

Without support for social purpose organisations to get involved in decisions and have a voice, who will listen to the Big Society?

When we asked respondents to predict the sector's influence in the future they were understandably quite pessimistic about the near future but appear to be much more optimistic for a future five years ahead. Fifty per cent of respondents thought organisations would have less influence in a year's time. But when forecasting five years ahead, 73 % of respondents thought the sector will have more influence.

Conclusion and recommendations

Social purpose reorganisations are rising admirably to current challenges, but there is only so much they can do to mitigate the impact of spending cuts and respond to the pace of changes to legislation, policy and the organisation of the public sector.

Without support for social purpose organisations to get involved in decisions and have a voice, who will listen to the Big Society?

The following are recommendations to address the issues raised in the survey and case studies:

Infrastructure organisations supporting social purpose groups:

- Learn from what others are doing, and consider adopting some of the methods highlighted in this report and case studies, such as Dorset's 'Bug' postcards for engaging small community groups; Bristol's tried and tested selection and accountability mechanisms for its Equality Action Group; or Voluntary Action North Somerset's experience running its voluntary sector forum on a shoestring.

- Continue to make the case for accountability, and social purpose organisations' involvement in public sector decision-making.

- Focus on those groups that are excluded from decision making and target them to make sure they are involved in voluntary sector assemblies and forums.

- Be flexible in changing times – focus on different ways to influence, not just on traditional forms of representation.

Local public bodies, Health and Well Being Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships:

- Invest in community engagement and involvement of social purpose organisations, or miss out on key expertise and access to the most marginalised in the community.

- Learn from the positive results from engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships when setting up new decision-making bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Ministers and central government:

- Send clear messages on good practice in engagement with social purpose organisations and the independence of the sector.

- Consider incorporating the Duty to Involve into the Localism Bill, to avoid losing the good practice the duty has supported.

- Continue to invest in infrastructure support for social purpose organisations provided at the most appropriate and efficient level.





Introduction

This report is about the relationship between social purpose and public sector organisations. In particular it looks at how social purpose organisations have a voice and are represented on decision-making bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships. It also explores the participation of often marginalised groups such as equality groups and small volunteer-led organisations. It includes case studies of particularly creative or successful ways of helping social purpose organisations influence decision makers.

South West Forum has carried out this short study to find out how strong and inclusive is the voice of the social purpose sector. It is particularly important at the moment because funding cuts are resulting in reduced support for social purpose organisations to be involved in decision making. This study presents a snapshot of how the voice and representation of social purpose organisations was organised and resourced in 2010-11, and how that is changing as public spending cuts start to have an impact.

Method

We sent a questionnaire in December 2010 to the main infrastructure organisation that co-ordinates the voice and representation of the social purpose sector in each of the fifteen upper tier local authorities in the South West of England to ask them how strong and inclusive the voice of the sector was in their area. We then carried out telephone interviews with five organisations to develop case studies.

The questionnaire and list of respondents are included in the appendix.

Because of time and resource constraints, the study focused on county or unitary level representation

and does not in the main include district, parish or neighbourhood level community engagement. We surveyed only one infrastructure organisation in each area, so it does not aim to present a comprehensive map of the voice and representation of the sector. There are many other organisations that support social purpose sector voice, such as specialist infrastructure organisations (for example The Care Forum, the Intercom Trust, Fatahe etc), district level infrastructure organisations, equality networks and others.

Our questionnaire asks about the involvement of marginalised groups in voluntary sector forums and assemblies. The responses should be interpreted with caution because we did not survey the marginalised groups themselves. However they do provide a useful indication of potential gaps. In the Further Resources section we list several other reports that map or explore the networks and representation of equality groups and others.

...funding cuts are resulting in reduced support for social purpose organisations to be involved in decision making.

What's Bugging You?

Creative ways to engage with voluntary and community organisations

An inventive scheme involving bugs and butterflies has enabled organisations in Dorset to gain more of a voice and influence in their communities. Dorset Community Action created user-friendly postcards on which people could write what was “bugging” them. These bugs were then collected, remedied and turned into butterflies.

Background

Katy Pascoe, DCA's Partnership Development Officer, presented the What's Bugging You? postcard campaign at the South West Forum Is Anyone Listening? event. She said the campaign was developed to help voluntary and community groups voice their concerns and issues – particularly smaller groups who don't have the time or interest to attend lots of partnership meetings.

The postcards were initiated as part of DCA's wider Dorset Voice project – the aim of which is to get true voluntary and community sector representation onto the Local Strategic Partnership, by identifying existing opportunities and creating new ways to engage.

Dorset Community Action created user-friendly postcards on which people could write what was “bugging” them. These bugs were then collected, remedied and turned into butterflies.

The Voice project runs themed third sector forums, nominations for representation onto strategic boards, and voice and influence training for voluntary and community organisations.

Dorset Community Action supports the voluntary sector across Dorset as the local Council for Voluntary Service. It currently has regular contact with more than 750 voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and local authorities.

Structure

For the What's Bugging You? campaign the distinctive bug postcards were presented to voluntary and community organisations by DCA's Community Development Workers. Any issues which arose – such



“The ‘bug’ postcards enabled us to collect an evidence base, which we could present in partnership meetings, such as: x number of groups have this concern.”

as lack of representation and information – were discussed and people were encouraged to write their specific bug on the back of the postcard.

These bugs were then tracked, themes picked up and links made to other groups with the same issues. Individual bugs were either dealt with by DCA’s team or sent as messages to representatives of the Local Strategic Partnership and Dorset’s Third Sector Infrastructure Group. The bugs were then kept until they were solved and turned into butterflies.

Success

Katy said they’d had great feedback from people who were very happy to fill in the postcards and the messages had been well received by the Local Strategic Partnership as a voice of the voluntary sector. She said: “We collected 103 bugs in total and had the potential to collect a lot more.

“Some bugs we were able to signpost people immediately. Others we could group together and find recurring themes. This enabled us to collect an evidence base, which we could present in partnership meetings, such as ‘x number of groups have this concern’.

“Some bugs said they needed more opportunities to demonstrate the value of their work so we included examples of their projects in our infrastructure groups report, The Value of the Third Sector in Dorset, which has been widely circulated to statutory partners in the county.”

Bugs that were turned into butterflies included securing training around safeguarding vulnerable adults and having a representative from DCA’s Voluntary Sector Health and Wellbeing Forum elected onto the Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board.

Katy said that a lot of bugs expressed a need for more information and opportunities for organisations to work together.

She said: “This feedback encouraged us to change the Voice project’s emphasis from delivering messages individually to providing opportunities for organisations to come together and have a united voice.

“We have recently held events on commissioning, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the “Big Society” with speakers who are decision makers – such as the Chief Executive of Dorset County Council – who have been happy to conduct question and answer sessions.

“The voluntary groups say they find it extremely valuable to come together as a sector.”

Meryl Hecquet, Community Development Manager at GROW Wiltshire, contacted Katy after hearing her presentation at the South West Forum event. Meryl was looking for a method to demonstrate an inclusive approach which all groups in Wiltshire could engage with. Wiltshire, as a county, includes a very large rural area – with approximately 2,000 registered charities – and Meryl had heard that the Internet could be prohibitive for some groups.

She said: “The postcard campaign that Katy described really appealed as a way to engage with the sector as it is usable by any voluntary sector group, not just those with Internet access. We spoke to Dorset Community Action who very generously shared all their experiences around the What’s Bugging You? Campaign.”

GROW Wiltshire developed the idea by creating a single prepaid postcard printed with the words “My conversation...” followed by a space for people to write down their issue. They also printed some

“The postcard campaign that Katy described really appealed as a way to engage with the sector as it is usable by any voluntary sector group, not just those with Internet access.”

rules of engagement and responses onto the cards before distributing them across the Wiltshire library service.

The Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Forum Network and the distribution of the postcards have only just begun but, so far, they have responded to a plea for support from an equalities group and the group has been invited to attend the Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Forum.

Meryl said they are now looking at taking the postcards to training and events programmes, for more hands-on distribution.

She added: “We really want to get the cards out there and think there is a role for them. They show people we’re prepared to be innovative and the goodwill and inclusivity of the approach has been welcomed and appreciated. It’s shown a willingness on the part of the GROW service to engage with groups not able to attend our meetings.

“It’s also a very cost effective scheme – just £110 and freepost cost for 1,000 cards.”

“It’s also a very cost effective scheme – just £110 and freepost cost for 1,000 cards.”

Funding

Dorset Strategic Partnership Board, Dorset County Council and Dorset Primary Care Trust have funded DCA’s Voice project, including the What’s Bugging You? postcard campaign. The project was allocated £50,000 for three years, ending in March 2011.

Georgina Morgan, DCA’s Acting Chief Executive, said that, due to the changes in requirements and funding for strategic partnerships, funding for the Voice project as a whole had been cut, and that they are working towards a new contract from the county council, which may include outcomes relating to representation.

She said: “With the strategic board funding gone we have lost more than half of the money, so don’t have the resource to sustain the Voice project. We are making loud noises higher up at the moment to try and ensure a voice for the sector at whatever strategic meetings occur.

“It has been a challenging project and the work will be even more challenging with less resources.”

Advice for others

After presenting her bug idea at the South West Forum event Katy said she received many phone calls from other organisations interested in the concept. She said: “I think the postcard scheme worked well because they were kept fun, accessible and easy – people could simply write by hand on something already provided.

“There are lots of ways to deliver messages to people making decisions about communities in your area that can take as much or as little of your time, depending on how creative you can be.”

Look what's happened
to your bug!



The Voice Project
Address: Dorset Community Action

To:

What's bugging you?

If you are part of a voluntary or community sector group in Dorset that has something to say, let us know...



Please write the issue, subject
message that you'd like to
space below:

Phone _____

Email _____



The Voice Project: Tel. 01305 216421 Email: katy.pascoe@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk
Dorset Community Action, Community House, The Barracks, Bridport Rd, Dorchester DT1 1YG

Future plans

As a result of funding cuts the Voice project will be severely restricted after March 2011. Dorset Community Action is presently undergoing a redundancy procedure.

However, they are still building on the success of the postcard campaign. The bug postcards are presently being replaced with a new design – a banner containing the proclamation “I’d like to say...” followed by a space to fill in an issue or concern.

Katy said: “We needed to look at how to continue to influence on a very limited budget. Whereas the bug postcards needed to have a conversation alongside their use, these new ones can be used as a tool on their own.

“We plan to develop the postcards as a stand-alone resource which we hope will be distributed in libraries and through organisations such as the Dorset Village Halls Network, and be available online too.”

At the Is Anyone Listening? event which Katy spoke at

“There are lots of ways to deliver messages to people making decisions about communities in your area that can take as much or as little of your time, depending on how creative you can be.”

Matthew Symonds, from Bristol’s Voscur, presented his organisation’s “A-Z of influence” – a pocket guide on how to influence decision making, including A for Ask Bristol website, B for Blog, C for Citizens Panel etc.

Katy liked this idea and used it as a template for DCA’s “A Little Book of Influence” – a handy guide which will be used in conjunction with the new banner postcards.

She said: “Through the Little Book of Influence people can be signposted to decision makers, such as MPs and councillors, and select who to send their banner postcards to. The new postcard and little book have developed from the bug campaign and will hopefully have the same success at getting people’s issues heard. After all, that’s what influence is all about – getting your voice heard.”

Find out more

For more information on Dorset Community Action’s Voice Project see <http://www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/voice>

For more information on Dorset Community Action visit <http://www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk>

Dorset Community Action can be contacted on 01305 250921

For more information on GROW Wiltshire visit <http://developecs.ning.com>

Contact Meryl Hecquet on 0845 034 5250 or meryl@growwiltshire.org.uk

March 2011

The Little Book of Influence

A guide to
influencing
decision makers
in Dorset

HAVE YOUR SAY!

www.DorsetCommunityAction.org.uk

How strong is the voice of the social purpose sector in the South West?

In each local authority area there is a voluntary sector forum, assembly or voice project that has received some funding from the public sector to support social purpose organisations to engage with public sector decision making. These vary from stand-alone organisations with several employees such as Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum or Gloucestershire Assembly of the VCS (hosted by GAVCA), to a forum that meets a few times a year and is supported by a part-time member of staff, such as in North Somerset.

In ten out of 15 areas, the voice and representation of the social purpose sector has been funded all or partly by Capacitybuilders, a £170m funding programme (and public body) which finished in March 2011 and is not being replaced. Other funders include local authorities, primary care trusts, criminal justice boards and the Big Lottery Fund.

See Table 1 – Voice in the South West

In ten out of 15 areas, the voice and representation of the social purpose sector has been funded all or partly by Capacitybuilders, a £170m funding programme (and public body) which finished in March 2011 and is not being replaced.

Table 1 – Voice in the South West

LA area	Organisation	Number of staff		Funding stream		Website link
		Pre March 2011	Post March 2011	Pre March 2011	Post March 2011	
Bath and North East Somerset	Voluntary Sector Forum	1pt	neg*	Local Authority Capacitybuilders	Some extra funding for two forums and currently in negotiation with LA	www.developecs.org.uk
Bournemouth	Bournemouth CVS	1pt	neg*	Local Strategic Partnership Bournemouth Children's Trust	In negotiation with Bournemouth Borough Council	www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk
Bristol	Voscur	2	neg*	Bristol City Council	Bristol City Council – March 2014	www.voscur.org
Cornwall	Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum	1ft 1pt	1ft 1pt	Cornwall Council Big Lottery	Cornwall Council – March 2012 Big Lottery – March 2013	cornwallvsf.org
Devon	Devon Consortium	1pt	1pt	Local Authority Capacitybuilders	Local Authority – 2013	www.devonconsortium.net
Dorset	The Voice Project Dorset Community Action	1ft 2pt	0	Dorset County Council PCT and LSP Capacitybuilders	Small contribution from Dorset NHS for Health and Wellbeing representation	www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk
Gloucestershire	Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS	2ft 3pt	1ft 1pt	Gloucestershire County Council PCT Criminal Justice Board	Gloucestershire County Council PCT Criminal Justice Board	www.gloshub.org.uk
North Somerset	North Somerset Voluntary Sector Forum VANS	1pt and CEO support	1pt and CEO support	Capacitybuilders	In negotiation with Fair Share Trust	www.vansweb.org.uk
Plymouth	Plymouth Third Sector Consortium	2	1.5	Capacitybuilders Plymouth City Council (2020 Partnership)	Plymouth City Council and other one off bids, eg NAVCA	www.plymouthtsc.org.uk
Poole	Poole CVS	1pt and CEO support	1pt and CEO support	Poole Children's Trust Capacitybuilders	Poole Children's Trust and some limited funding from NHS and Poole CVS's earned income	www.poolecvs.org.uk
Somerset	SCIPP	3pt	1pt	Capacitybuilders Big Lottery	Big Lottery – August 2011	www.scipp.org.uk
South Gloucestershire	Voluntary Voices and Voluntary Sector Steering Group CVS South Glos	1pt	1pt	Local Authority Capacitybuilders	Local Authority	www.cvs-sg.org.uk
Swindon	Voice Development Voluntary Action Swindon	1ft 1pt	1ft 1pt	Swindon Borough Council	Swindon Borough Council – March 2012	www.vas-swindon.org.uk
Torbay	Torcom	3pt	1pt	Capacitybuilders	Local Authority – September 2011	www.torcom.org.uk
Wiltshire	Wiltshire VCS Assembly	1.5	neg*	Capacitybuilders	Funding under negotiation	www.wiltshireinfrastructureconsortium.org.uk

* under negotiation April 2011. † Significant representation support also provided by The Care Forum in health and social care (www.thecareforum.org.uk)

Many respondents reported that their Local Strategic Partnerships are being slimmed down, in many cases with drastic reduction in the involvement of social purpose organisations.

Representation on Local Strategic Partnerships

We asked how many representatives there are of the social purpose sector on Local Strategic Partnerships, and at what level (board or sub-group level). Every organisation that answered this question said they had social purpose sector representation at board level and at thematic/sub-group level.

Nine of the 14 respondents had between one and three representatives at board level, including Devon, Dorset and Bath and North East Somerset (who used to have seven but now have one). In December 2010 both Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium and Gloucestershire VCS Assembly reported 20 social purpose representatives on their Local Strategic Boards. However, representation in Gloucestershire is being drastically slimmed down – see Gloucestershire VCS Assembly case study on page 26 for more details.

At the thematic/ sub-group level there appears to be good representation of the social purpose sector, with 13 of the 14 question respondents reporting that they had five or more social purpose representatives at this level on their LSP. Although, for one of those 12 – Somerset – the LSP had been suspended. Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, said that in a survey they compiled in March 2010 they identified 25 partnerships with 62 voluntary and community sector representative positions, occupied by 36 individuals.

However, as with Gloucestershire, many respondents reported that their Local Strategic Partnership structures are being slimmed down, in many cases with drastic reduction in the involvement of social purpose organisations.

Decisions about spending cuts

Most respondents had been invited to consultation meetings with the public sector. Some, including Gloucestershire, have been involved in pre-consultation and consultation processes. Helen Black, CVS South Gloucestershire, said the Local Strategic Partnership had received a report about the value of the local voluntary and community sector through the Compact Implementation Group (the Compact is the agreement between social purpose and public sectors) and Local Strategic Partnership chief officers and board.

Karen Winchcombe, Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium, said that through the Wiltshire Assembly (formed by the unitary authority Wiltshire Council) public sector bodies were holding ‘budget forums’ in a variety of locations across Wiltshire and members of the voluntary and community sector are invited to attend.

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, said: “We have been involved in some early consultation and feedback sessions regarding Plymouth City Council budgets, prior to budget priority setting meetings within the local authority committees and meetings. With regard to Primary Care Trust budgets we have had involvement in information sharing

“We have been involved in some early consultation and feedback sessions regarding Plymouth City Council budgets”



Managing the cuts has highlighted both good and bad practice locally and has put great pressure on both statutory and voluntary sector colleagues

meetings and subsequent updates but to date have not had a formal or informal consultation about the potential reductions in funding.”

Christopher Beale, Poole CVS, said: “Managing the cuts has highlighted both good and bad practice locally and has put great pressure on both statutory and voluntary sector colleagues. Both sectors are now working on the next stage of the cuts, looking at how we can mitigate the impact, support the voluntary sector and sustain vital services.”



What difference does the sector's voice make?

We asked respondents for examples of decisions or behaviour of public sector bodies that had been changed as a result of social purpose organisations' influence. Eleven of the 15 survey respondents answered this question. About three quarters of those replied with a positive account of how the voice of the social purpose sector has had an impact on statutory decisions or behaviours.

Influencing spending cuts

Helen Black, South Gloucestershire CVS, said the voluntary and community sector is a valued member of the Local Strategic Partnership. It has a strong voice as the Chief Officer of the CVS is the vice chair of the Local Strategic Partnership Board and member of the Chief Officer's Group.

She said: "Both boards have received papers and presentations over the last six months regarding the voluntary and community sector and potential impact of the cuts."

Ruth Shearn, Bournemouth CVS, said her organisation managed to prevent some significant public spending cuts to local voluntary organisations, which were

included in their council's budget projections for 2010/11 and 2011/12. She said: "We challenged approx £200k of cuts to children and young people's services and as a result the cuts did not take place." Similarly Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, told how, through the Local Area Agreement, they managed to save £1m of cuts to the social purpose sector during the government's initial £6bn spending cuts in 2010.

Improving public sector practice

The Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS is also well represented at a strategic level and its representatives are currently in negotiation with Gloucester City Council about their decisions on cuts. The VCS Assembly has had many successes in its work in close proximity to statutory decision makers. As a direct result of the VCS Assembly's work with children and young people Gloucestershire County Council learned more from the sector about Safeguarding (protecting and promoting children and young people's welfare) good practice and updated its own procedures and policies. Jess McQuail (formerly Mace), Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said there have been many times when statutory practices and policies would have looked very different if the VCS Assembly had not been involved and some strategies have been completely rewritten.

"We challenged approx. £200K of cuts to children and young people's services and as a result the cuts did not take place."

The Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium, with two of its member organisations, has recently worked with some town and parish councillors to help them consider more about the involvement of the social purpose sector, by working with Changes consultancy to pilot Voice and Echo working together as one community engagement tool. After the training one of the councillors said: "It makes us, as a town council, think about community involvement – are we doing



“Representatives of the voluntary sector on key planning forums have brought challenge to statutory partners, helped bring a unique perspective of service user and community views and helped the wider network of voluntary organisations understand opportunities.”

as much as we could to reach out and take on board what they say and how we validate what they are saying?”

More information on this training can be seen in the case study on page 44.

Culture of dialogue and joint decision making

Meanwhile in Poole, Christopher Beale of Poole CVS, said success has come from developing a culture of

dialogue, partnership work and joint decision making. He quoted a statutory sector colleague, Nick Wharam, Strategic Planning and Commissioning Manager of the Borough of Poole, who said: “Representatives of the voluntary sector on key planning forums ... have brought challenge to statutory partners, helped bring a unique perspective of service user and community views and helped the wider network of voluntary organisations understand opportunities.”

Other successes included the creation of a new Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning



Board. Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, said: “This is a new partnership between the voluntary and community sector and local authority, with the Primary Care Trust as observers at present. It covers ten ‘themes’ of work including equality and diversity, community support, public health, the environment, children and young people. We hope this is an opportunity to jointly explore new ways of working and to propose innovative solutions to the public sector cuts through better use of the local voluntary and community sector.”

The importance of dialogue is echoed in the experience of North Somerset Voluntary Sector Forum. Bob Snow said the forum meetings, run by Voluntary Action North Somerset, are well supported by the voluntary and community sector and engaged with by public bodies. The meetings have enabled their members to gain more knowledge and understanding of statutory bodies, and the way decisions impact on the organisations they are involved in. This in turn has empowered them with the knowledge required to influence their public authority decision makers. More information on the forum, including its uncertain future, is available in the case study on page 58.

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, expressed difficulty in using opportunities to influence when there is so much change happening across all public sectors.

Current challenges

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, expressed difficulty in using opportunities to influence when there is so much change happening across all public sectors. However, she was confident that their relationships with Plymouth City Council and NHS Plymouth (the city’s Primary Care Trust) had vastly improved and hoped to be more influential in future budget and priority setting.

However, the remaining quarter of respondents were not so optimistic. Amongst those who said they can’t show any impact anymore is the Voluntary Sector Forum in Bath and North East Somerset – a once very successful forum that was held as a model of good practice. After the last funding round, the sector lost its representative role in Bath and North East Somerset.

Strong and vibrant voluntary sector representation

The Gloucestershire VCS Assembly model

The Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS is often held up nationally as a good example of voluntary sector representation. For seven years it has been running as a strong and vibrant voice of the sector, working alongside the public sector at a strategic level. However, having just lost 75% of its funding, its future is now uncertain.

Background

The VCS Assembly is run by GAVCA – Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action, the support organisation for Gloucestershire’s voluntary and community sector. It was established in 2003 with the aim to strengthen and support the county’s voluntary and community sector – by providing a strategic voice and an arena for action and discussion.

Gloucestershire has a population of 564,559 (2001 census) and more than 2,800 voluntary and community organisations – 50% of which have no paid members of staff.

Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS is based on the belief that collective action is more influential than

Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS is based on the belief that collective action is more influential than a series of individual voices.

a series of individual voices and that co-operation enables people to share strength through a pooling of energy, ideas and resources.

All voluntary and community organisations in the county are automatically members of the VCS Assembly and entitled to receive information, attend events organised by the assembly team and respond to consultations.

Structure

The VCS Assembly has been running as a mirror to the county’s Local Strategic Partnership – the Gloucestershire Conference. Just like the Conference, it has had an Assembly Board comprised of the chairs and vice-chairs of the four thematic groups – Children and Young People; Health and Wellbeing; Environment; Safer and Stronger Communities. A fifth group, Economic Development, has ceased since its funding from the Economic Partnership was cut in 2009. Running alongside the board and thematic groups has been an Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.

From within the Assembly Board and thematic groups representatives have been elected onto the Gloucestershire Conference – 45 representatives from the voluntary and community sector in total.

The VCS Assembly traditionally meets in full at least once a year. This meeting is open to all voluntary and community organisations in the county.

At the time of writing, a template of a post March 2011 slimmed down Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS was emerging, in line with a reduced Gloucestershire Conference. This new VCS Assembly would include the Assembly Board, three thematic groups and no Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.



Success

The VCS Assembly has been responsible for many success stories across Gloucestershire's voluntary and community sector.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS Team Manager, said: "Without the portal of the VCS Assembly things would take a lot longer and we would be spending a lot more time communicating. There also wouldn't be such a maturity and understanding between sectors – especially with criminal justice and adult and social care, which have seen some really successful working partnerships.

"Some practices and policies would look very different without the VCS Assembly's input. Some strategies have been completely rewritten because of it."

As an example of its success, the VCS Assembly team supported a worker from the County Community Projects organisation to be an elected voluntary and community sector representative on Gloucestershire County Council's Safeguarding Board. As a direct result of this work County Community Projects learned more about safeguarding (protecting and promoting children and young people's welfare),

reviewed and updated their own procedures and are now seen as a model of good practice, supporting other organisations to develop their own practices.

Members of the VCS Assembly team have also persuaded Gloucestershire County Council to put on safeguarding training for the sector, thus recognising that voluntary and community organisations are part of the wider children and young people workforce.

And as a direct result of their strong relationships with criminal agencies and the local police, GAVCA has recently received five months funding of £115,000 from Clinks and the Home Office, to fund a voluntary and community sector consortium to work in partnership with criminal justice organisations. Gloucestershire is one of four areas to take part in a national pilot scheme, to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sector in Integrated Offender Management arrangements.

Funding

In 2009/10 the VCS Assembly received a total of £210,000 for its work. Most of this funding came from Gloucestershire County Council. Of the rest, Gloucestershire Constabulary funded £10,000 for the Safer and Stronger Communities group and the

Primary Care Trust granted £10,000 for the Health and Wellbeing group.

The total funding has now been reduced to £60,000, with further cuts threatened.

Jess said there have been some glimmers of hope post March 2011. After negotiation with the VCS Assembly Team, the county's Children and Young People Directorate has awarded some local 'transition funding' for local voluntary and community sector groups to help them plan next steps for projects funded by the Directorate as funding decreases or disappears altogether.

Advice for others

Jess said that the key to the VCS Assembly's success has been the team's communication skills and relationships with their members and the public sector.

She said: "You can have the best structure in the world but if you don't have understanding and

communication skills it will fall flat on its face. So much is about individuals investing time, energy and diplomacy into building up relationships.

"One of the most important parts of our job is to develop relationships with the public sector. Once they've understood what you can offer and who to talk to things can really take off."

Recent successful inclusion in the Clinks/ Home Office pilot scheme came about in part as a result of good relationships with Gloucestershire Constabulary and Gloucestershire Probation Trust.

Also key to their success, said Jess, is the emphasis they place on keeping their countywide database of voluntary and community groups up to date and useful, especially as the public sector relies on them to communicate well with its members.

Future plans

With a huge 75% cut in its funding the Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS is presently

"One of the most important parts of our job is to develop relationships with the public sector. Once they've understood what you can offer and who to talk to things can really take off."





mapping a different course for its future. The Gloucestershire Conference is being radically slimmed down and a new Leadership Group, which excludes the voluntary and community sector, has been created.

Gloucestershire County Council has indicated that it will be less interested in voice and more in the VCS Assembly being a portal to communicate with the voluntary and community sector – providing information, intelligence and advice on particular issues.

Jess said: “We are looking at where we should be prioritising our influence and asking: Do people have the resources now to actually be VCS reps on Local Strategic Partnership boards?”

“The VCS Assembly has been quite a good example and ahead of its game with its structure, funding and partnership working. However, this is now changing. We’re going into a different arena now and we are not going to have the same resource.”

She said that there will probably be less thematic partnerships and more of an emphasis on task and finish groups on particular issues – including the “Big Society”.

“The future is going to be a slimmed down VCS Assembly with the focus on it being a network of

networks. Our priority will be around voluntary and community sector involvement in the broadest sense, in recognition that there is a need to have a diversity of voices and views heard.

“There will be a greater emphasis on the VCS Assembly as a conduit for the voluntary and community sector and we will be concentrating on capacity building – looking at needs and gaps, not just views.”

Find out more

For more information on the VCS Assembly visit www.gloshub.org.uk/Gloucestershire-vcs-assembly

For more information on GAVCA visit www.gavca.org.uk

Contact Jess McQuail on 01452 522600 or jessm@glosassembly.org.uk

March 2011

How inclusive is the voice of the social purpose sector?

Survey respondents were asked to rate the involvement of marginalised groups within their voluntary sector forums or assemblies. Replies were on the following scale:

- not involved;
- slightly involved – such as on a mailing list or attend events;
- involved – maybe as a representative on an equality sub-group;
- very involved – for example, on a project board or at executive level.

The responses are the perceptions of the co-ordinators of mainstream voice and representation of the voluntary sector and do not necessarily reflect the views of marginalised groups themselves.

Asylum Seeker and Refugee groups

More than 64 % of respondents said asylum seeker and refugee groups were ‘not involved’ in their voluntary sector forum or assembly. Three organisations reported they were ‘involved’ or ‘slightly involved’ and just one ‘very involved’.

Ruth Shearn, Bournemouth CVS, makes an important observation: “We don’t know about groups which are

specifically focusing on asylum seekers and refugees, although we do have several Black and Minority Ethnic organisations who come to our events and are signed up our to e-networks.”

As there is overlap between the refugee/asylum seekers and Black and Minority Ethnic sectors, it is possible that the level of involvement of refugee groups is slightly higher than suggested by our responses, but our findings nevertheless suggest that many areas across the South West have very little engagement between refugees and asylum seekers and the public sector.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups

Sixty per cent of respondents said BME groups were either ‘involved’, or ‘very involved’, in their voice structure and the remaining 40 % said BME groups were only ‘slightly involved’. Most, had BME representation on steering groups and boards. Dorset Community Action, for example, reported BME representation, through their organisation, on the Local Strategic Partnership board.

Children and young people’s groups

Two-thirds of respondents said that children and young people’s groups were ‘very involved’ in their voluntary sector forum. And the majority of the others said they were ‘involved’.

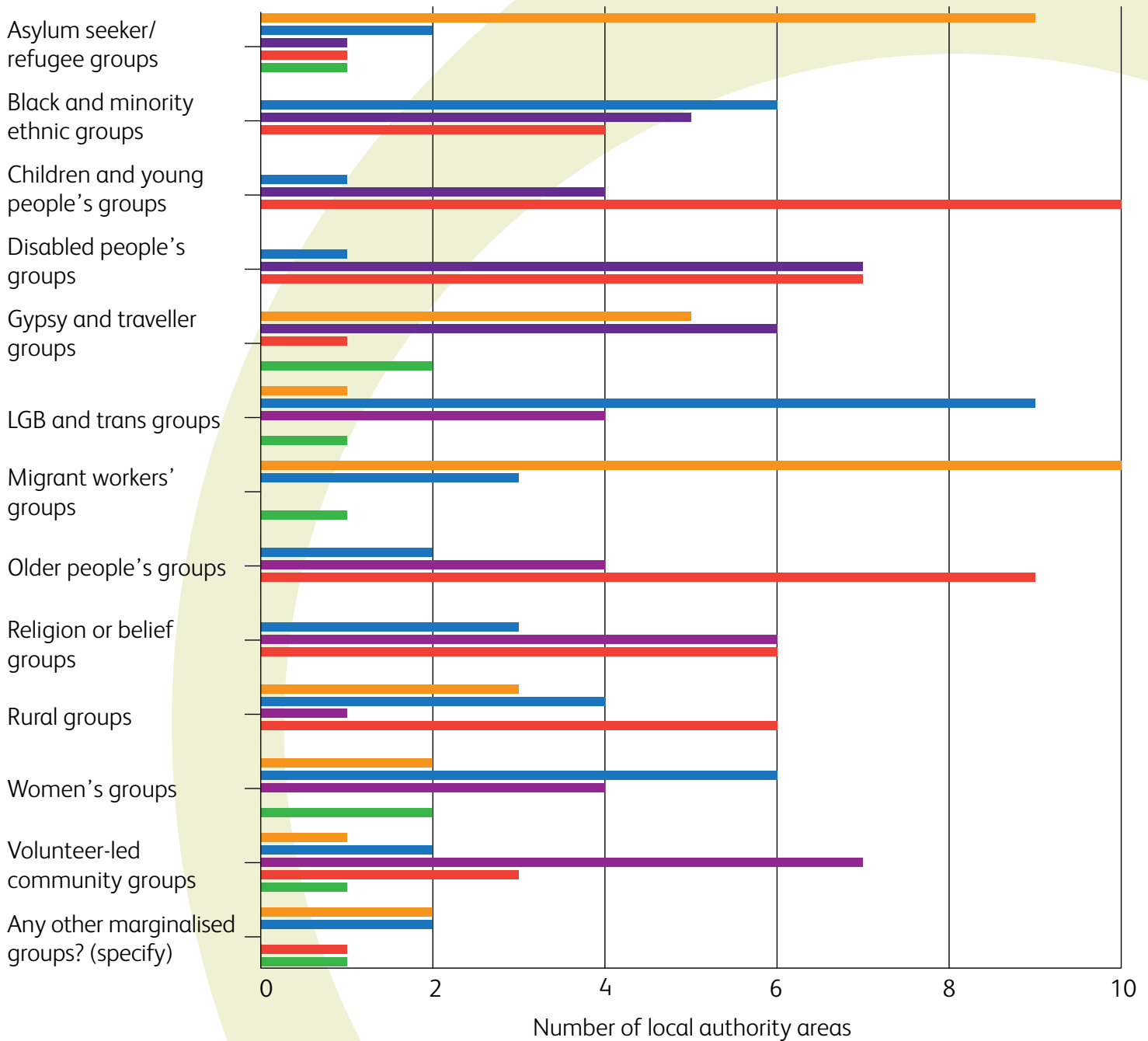
Two-thirds of respondents said that children and young people’s groups were ‘very involved’ in their voluntary sector forum.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said: “There is lots of involvement and activity here. We have had a voluntary and community sector VCS Assembly Team worker focusing on children and young people’s groups and more than 500 groups are signed up to receive children and young people bulletins and information.” Dorset Community

How strong is our voice?

Survey November 2010

How involved were the following groups in your voluntary sector assembly, forum or network over the past 12 months?



Action's Katy Pascoe was also very positive, saying said they have a well-attended 0-19 forum, which has 13 elected representatives working across the Dorset Children's Trust Board, and Ruth Shearn reported similar good voluntary sector engagement with Bournemouth's Children's Trust Board.

This does not reflect the participation of young people themselves in decision making, just the involvement of organisations working with young people.

- Not involved
- Slightly involved (eg on mailing list or have come to one event)
- Involved (eg as a representative on in an equality sub-group)
- Very involved (eg on project board/executive)
- Don't know



Sixty per cent of respondents reported lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups as just 'slightly involved' in their forum.

Disabled people's groups

More than 90% of those questioned said that disabled people's groups were either 'involved' or 'very involved' in their forum. Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, said: "Our Third Sector Health and Well Being Forum is well attended and supported by disabled people's groups... [and] one of the representatives on the Health and Well Being Partnership Board is the Chief Executive of the Dorset Mental Health Forum." Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum has a disabled people's organisation on its forum board and Bournemouth CVS supports representatives from disabled people's groups on the Local Strategic Partnership, including at senior board level.

However it should be noted that the involvement of disability organisations does not necessarily mean that disabled people themselves are directly involved in public sector decision making as some such organisations are not led by disabled people. There is however increasing support for user-led organisations which goes some way to address this.

Gypsy and Traveller groups

Our survey found very low levels of engagement of Gypsy and Traveller groups in voluntary sector representation, with only one of the 15 areas responding that Gypsy and Traveller groups were 'involved' in their forum or assembly. Of the others, six said they were 'slightly involved' and five said they were 'not involved' (two did not know and one gave no response).

Plymouth Third Sector Consortium's new Pan Equality Network has a Gypsy and Traveller representative and, at Dorset Community Action, The Children's Society's

Gypsy and Traveller youth worker is an active representative within the Children's Trust Board and a member of the third sector Health and Wellbeing Forum.

Other respondents reported that members of Gypsy and Traveller communities had attended their equalities events.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups

Sixty per cent of respondents reported lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups as just 'slightly involved' in their forum. Of the others, 27% said they were 'involved' and 7% (one respondent) said they were 'not involved.'

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said that a representative from the Gay-Glos organisation is on the VCS Assembly Board, very involved in the sub-groups, and is also chair of GAVCA (the organisation which supports the VCS Assembly).

Wendy Stephenson, Voscur, said there is a LGBT representative on Bristol's Local Strategic Partnership. Several young people's LGB and trans groups attend the 0-19 forum at Dorset Community Action and, at Bournemouth CVS, the Space Youth Group (for LGB and trans young people) attends events and is signed up to e-networks.

The Intercom Trust, which supports the LGBT sector in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole, is in contact with around 90 LGBT organisations (see A Firmer Foundation, 2006, in Further Resources), but our survey suggests that few of these are involved in voluntary sector forums and assemblies.

The involvement of women's groups was also variable but quite low, with no area reporting that women's groups were 'very involved'.

Migrant workers' groups

Only three respondents felt that migrant workers' groups were 'slightly involved' in their organisations. Ten said they were 'not involved', and one didn't know. Their involvement was generally reported to be through other organisations such as race equality councils or rural community councils, such as via Community Council of Devon's migrant worker support service. Although migrant workers' groups make up a fairly small proportion of the social purpose sector, we asked about their involvement because they are a group that often faces poverty and isolation due to poor working conditions and poor access to services.

Older people's groups

Sixty per cent of survey respondents said older people's groups were 'very involved' in their forums. A further 26% rated older people's groups as 'involved' and the rest answered 'slightly involved'. Many areas had older people's representatives on Local Strategic Partnership sub-groups or voluntary sector forum boards.

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, added: "The older people's theme group within the strategic partnership has open membership and tours around the county holding four meetings a year in each of the six districts. It therefore has a lot of involvement by older people themselves and the voluntary and community sector groups that work with them."

Dorset's involvement of older people is well recognised with its celebrated Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme, see case study at www.empowermentworks.blogspot.com/stories.

Religion or belief groups

Eighty per cent felt that groups based on religion or belief were 'involved' or 'very involved' in their forums or assemblies. The remaining 20% answered that these groups were slightly involved.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, added that there is a faith representative on the County Equalities Group, although this group may not have a future due to spending cuts. The same representative attends Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Board meetings. Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, said that Dorset Churches Together is well represented across the voluntary and community sector forums and that the vice chair of the Local Strategic Partnership Board is from this organisation.

Seven others, including Plymouth's Third Sector Consortium and Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, reported involvement at board and forum level.

Rural groups

Across a mix of rural and urban-based organisations, the spread of ratings for this group was quite wide. Unsurprisingly five of the more rural areas tended to say that rural groups were 'very involved' (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, North Somerset and Wiltshire), and the three urban areas of Bournemouth, Bristol and Poole said that rural groups were 'not involved'.

In Gloucestershire which has a mixture of urban and rural areas, respondent Jess McQuail said: "There is a rural representative on our VCS Assembly Board. The Rural Community Council is involved in many of the sub-groups and chairs the VCS Safer and Stronger Communities thematic group."

Interestingly both Plymouth and Swindon which are urban areas reported that rural groups were 'slightly involved'.

Women's groups

The involvement of women's groups was also variable but quite low, with no area reporting that women's groups were 'very involved'. Of those who responded, 29% said women's groups were 'involved', 43% said they were 'slightly involved' and 14% said they were not involved in their organisation. Two respondents didn't know and one did not respond.

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, said women's groups were represented on the newly formed Pan Equality Network and their Social Enterprise Network. And Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, said they have women's groups as members who also attend meetings to set up their Equality group.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, added: "Women's groups are not explicitly involved, although there is an active domestic abuse and sexual violence voluntary and community organisations sub-group, which is dominated by women-led groups."

Volunteer-led community groups

More than 70% of respondents said that volunteer-led community groups were 'involved' or 'very involved' with their forums or assemblies. Only one replied with the rating 'not involved'. Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said that involvement varies across the VCS Assembly groups – for example, Gay-Glos is a volunteer-led group and very active and the

VCS Assembly's Environment sub-group is dominated by very small volunteer-led community groups.

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, added: "Although volunteer-led community groups have not traditionally involved themselves in influence and voice based activities we have been successful in identifying their issues and concerns through the introduction of the 'Bug' postcards." For more information on Dorset Community Action's bug postcard scheme see the case study on page 12.

Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, said they have many volunteer-led groups in their membership who attend many events. She also added that they have specific 'community group' seats to fill on their forum board.

Any other marginalised groups

There was a limited response to this part of the question. Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, was the sole respondent to specify another group. She said representatives of social housing tenants have become forum board members through Cornwall Neighbourhoods For Change – a tenant-led regeneration organisation.

Rurality and the involvement of marginalised groups

We also explored whether an area's rurality made a difference to the perceived level of involvement of different equalities groups. It might be expected that urban areas would report greater involvement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups for example, but in fact there was little difference between rural and urban areas in this respect (the areas that reported BME groups were very involved were Plymouth,

Table 2 – Rurality and the involvement of marginalised groups

Local authority area	% rural*	How involved were the following groups in your voluntary sector assembly, forum or network over the past 12 months?											
		Asylum seeker/refugee groups	Black and minority ethnic groups	Children and young people's groups	Disabled people's groups	Gypsy and traveller groups	LGB and trans groups	Migrant workers' groups	Older people's groups	Religion or belief groups	Rural groups	Women's groups	Volunteer-led community groups
Bournemouth	0	Don't know	Slightly involved	Very involved	Very involved	Don't know	Slightly involved	Don't know	Very involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Don't know	Slightly involved
Bristol	0	Slightly involved	Involved	Very involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Not involved	Involved	Very involved	Not involved	Involved	Involved
Plymouth	0	Very involved	Very involved	Very involved	Involved	Involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Very involved
Poole	5	Not involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved
Swindon	14	Not involved	Involved	Involved	Involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Involved
Torbay	15	no response	Involved	Very involved	Very involved	no response	Slightly involved	no response	Very involved	Very involved	no response	no response	no response
South Gloucestershire	19	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Involved
Bath & North East Somerset	46	Not involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Involved	Involved	Involved	Involved	Involved
Gloucestershire	51	Involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Very involved	Not involved	Involved	Not involved	Very involved	Involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Involved
North Somerset	55	Not involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Don't know	Don't know	Not involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Don't know	Not involved
Dorset	62	Not involved	Involved	Very involved	Very involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Very involved	Not involved	Involved
Wiltshire	69	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Don't know
Somerset	76	Not involved	Involved	Involved	Involved	Not involved	Not involved	Not involved	Involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Involved
Devon	79	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Very involved
Cornwall	92	Not involved	Slightly involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Slightly involved	Not involved	Very involved	Very involved	Very involved	Slightly involved	Very involved

* Office of National Statistics local authority rural classification downloaded from: www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/geography/products/area-classifications/rural-urban-definition-and-la-classification/rural-urban-local-authority-la-classification/index.html

Devon, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire). However in some cases rurality did seem to make a difference. Interestingly the four areas that said that women's organisations were involved (no area said that they were very involved) were Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, Plymouth and Swindon. Similarly more urban areas seemed slightly more likely to say that LGBT groups were 'involved', although this difference was not as marked.

We used the Office of National Statistics local authority rural classification downloaded from www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/geography/products/area-classifications/rural-urban-definition-and-la-classification/rural-urban-local-authority-la-classification/index.html

See Table 2 – Rurality and the involvement of marginalised groups

Conclusions

Our survey indicated that the groups that have least involvement in voluntary sector forums and assemblies are:

- Asylum seekers and refugees – though in some cases they may be represented by Black and Minority Ethnic organisations more generally.
- Gypsies and Travellers' organisations
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender organisations
- Migrant workers' organisations
- Women's organisations

It was particularly notable that these five groups were the only equality groups that some respondents said that they didn't know how involved they were in voluntary sector forums and assemblies. This suggests that these groups are less visible within the social purpose sector and less well linked in with the wider sector.



For many of these groups, their organisations make up a fairly small proportion of the social purpose sector, and this will affect how likely they are to be involved in voluntary sector forums and assemblies. However, they all represent groups that are particularly excluded within society, and whose views and needs are important to the delivery of public services.

It is important to stress that those groups that were reported to have higher levels of involvement are still often excluded from decision-making, and may themselves report barriers that were not identified in this survey.

In some cases equality groups may be involved in decision making through separate forums from mainstream social purpose organisations, for example through a public sector equality scrutiny group run by the local authority.

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, added: “We have struggled with identifying our role for involving marginalised groups within our representation structures because the county council coordinate the forum for equality and diversity across Dorset, which is where we have signposted groups to. They have representation on the Local Strategic Partnership.”

Nevertheless it is the responsibility of voluntary sector forums and assemblies to ensure that they are inclusive of marginalised groups within the sector so that everybody’s voice can be heard.

Helen Black, CVS South Gloucestershire, said that their Reaching Out Linking In Project is supporting this work, but it is only funded until June 2011. She added: “We want to mainstream our work with equalities organisations so that they can access capacity building and support and be part of the voice structures in South Gloucestershire.”

How to make the social purpose sector’s voice more inclusive

We asked what steps had been taken to make the sector’s voice more inclusive, and respondents shared lots many useful ideas for widening participation. Their responses provide many helpful tips on addressing inequality.

Use lots of different ways to communicate

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium stressed that they seek to include all members and networks by communicating opportunities to them, using “email, our website, social media, local media, postal communications and events”. In Swindon, Seniz Ismet, reported that their organisation launched a new directory last year including more than 1000 groups and associations, and they use this information to communicate, survey and invite organisations to key sector events. Seniz said that, as a result of this directory, they have a wide-reach within the sector across a wide range of groups.

Use accessible community venues for events

Plymouth Third Sector Consortium reported that they “use community venues, trying to ensure that they have good transport links, accessibility and parking if needed. We always try and identify if translations, interpretation and visual and audio aids are needed and also vary the times of the day and week we meet with members.”

Support or set up equality networks

Several areas have equality networks that enable different groups to come together and increase the voice of marginalised people. For example, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS has set up a multi-sector county equality group with representatives on the VCS Assembly Board. Christopher Beale, Poole CVS, said that with Dorset Race Equality Council and Bournemouth CVS they have set up an Equality and Diversity Forum at which organisations are updated on developments and can feedback their views.

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, said: “We have recently established a Pan Equality Network. One of our earliest pieces of work is the production of an Equalities Action plan, which will be adopted by the 2020 Partnership Board as a key strategic indicator. This is at an early stage but with the chair of the network also the 2020 Communities of Interest Board Representative we are seeing encouraging signs of future partnership working.”

Poole CVS also has a successful children and young people’s representation project, and Christopher Beale said that they are “now developing a similar process to one we have developed for children and young people’s groups for groups working with adults/older people and another one for groups

working with ex offenders. We are also exploring developing an initiative for groups working on environmental issues.”

Do an equality impact assessment

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS reported that they have carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment of the VCS Assembly meetings.

Get funding for a specific equality project

In South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset, engagement with equality groups has been significantly improved as a result of a focussed equality project, ‘Reaching Out Linking In’ which was funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The project aimed to support hard to reach groups working in the field of equalities to become engaged with public policy and decision-making.

See <http://www.equalitiesengagebanes.org.uk/>

Accommodate different needs

Small community groups in particular often benefit from tailored individual contact rather than larger ‘strategic’ events because many have little time for influencing. Ruth Walls from Plymouth Third Sector Consortium stressed that “the sector is made up of different needs and we need to do our best to accommodate them.”

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, said that time to meet groups individually would help. She said: “We have found that small groups struggle to see the relevance of county work, or have the time to engage in influencing. They really appreciate and benefit from bespoke, individual contact (which we can’t do for everyone!)”

Models of equality representation

What works? Voscur and the Bristol Partnership Equalities Action Group

To manage the process of enabling many voices to be heard it helps to have delegated a spokesperson. But finding the right spokesperson can be a real challenge. Voscur has supported Bristol's Equalities Action Group to succeed in this challenge when appointing representatives to sit on statutory equalities boards.

Ruth Pitter, Voscur's Equalities Manager, described how they found the right people during a presentation at the recent South West Forum/ Equality South West Equal Rights, Equal Voices event. The details of Voscur's equality representation process are outlined below.

Background

Bristol Partnership, the city's Local Strategic Partnership, set up the Equalities Action Group in 2003. For the most part of its existence the chair of the group has also sat on the Partnership's Executive Board.

The group meets quarterly to scrutinise the partnership's decisions and identify issues that

Voscur and other voluntary and community organisations challenged the Bristol Partnership to re-establish it. The group is now fully supported by the partnership.

relate to the collective experiences of people from the different equalities strands. It was disbanded as part of the course of the Bristol Partnership's review in 2008. Voscur and other voluntary and community organisations challenged the Bristol Partnership to re-establish it. The group is now fully supported by the partnership.

Structure

When the Equalities Action Group was first formed a selection panel chose the six representatives from each equality strand – gender, race, faith, sexual orientation, age and disability – to serve as representatives on it. However, this didn't work well because the representatives had no mandate or people to report back to; it was unclear at times whether they were representing themselves as individuals or the wider community.

Three years later, when a new group of representatives was required, a panel system was employed again. This time the emphasis was on recruiting "equalities champions" – people who had expertise in broad equality and diversity issues, rather than just having experience and knowledge of one strand. It was felt that such people could represent all equality groups on the partnership, not just their own equalities perspective. However, it proved difficult to find people who fulfilled this criterion – potential representatives usually had experience of one or two areas of equality, but lacked an overarching knowledge.

This process was abandoned and a new system planned in 2010. Voscur worked with other equalities groups on building a system of true representation. They opted for an open election process whereby members of all equality groups could nominate



people to be a representative within one of six equality strands, and vote for candidates.

Individuals were nominated by representatives of organisations working on behalf of an equalities community or group, and seconded by individuals with experience of equalities work. They stated how they felt the nominee fulfilled the skills and aptitude for the role. These statements were then posted onto the Bristol Partnership and voluntary and community organisations websites for voters to read.

In May 2010 each candidate spoke at a hustings event before a full ballot was taken. Steps were made to ensure large organisations couldn't block vote in their own candidates.

Success

It appears that even in these early stages – the new representatives have had three meetings to date – the new system of electing representation has proved very successful.

“Firstly, have a very clear structure and a good support network for your representatives. And build good relationships with statutory agencies so it doesn't just become a case of ‘them and us’.”

Ruth said: “The group is feeling very buoyant and confident right now. People are happy with the representatives and feel that they have a mandate to speak on their behalf.

“We spent a lot of time on process to try and get representation right. I think it was worth it as there is a real value to what we do on the partnership – bringing people together to make change happen.”

Confidence in the Equalities Action Group has also been raised by new support from public sector representatives who, Ruth said, are bringing a “sense of impetus” to the meetings.

This support from the public sector came about after Voscur and other groups contacted equality managers from agencies across the public sector including the university, police, fire and NHS.

Ruth said: “The six elected reps from the voluntary and community sector – including the chair and vice chair of the group – and those from the public sector, along with support staff from Voscur and other voluntary groups, now form a very vibrant and democratic group to take on the challenges of the next three years.”

Funding

The Equalities Action Group – which has included the running of networks for a wider equalities strategy – is funded by the Bristol Partnership, and Voscur has contributed its time and resources to it. In the past the Bristol Partnership granted Voscur £2,000 to support the Equalities network for a year.

Voscur committed its own time and resources into co-facilitating the recent representative Equalities Action Group elections.

Advice for others

Ruth said they had learnt a lot from working with the representatives and felt that – although it required a lot of work – the election system was by far the best way to get a true model of representation.

On the day-to-day support of the group she offered this advice: “Firstly, have a very clear structure and a good support network for your representatives. And build good relationships with statutory agencies so it doesn’t just become a case of ‘them and us’ with different approaches to equalities.”

Future plans

Voscur has recently secured a new three-year contract with Bristol Council to manage the support service to Bristol’s voluntary and community sector – including services to facilitate voice and influence. The new government’s plans for Local Strategic Partnerships in this round of spending cuts is still unclear, although many across the country are said to be looking to streamline their groups and sub-groups.

Ruth is very clear that the Equalities Action Group needs to build its strength in these difficult times. To add to the support from the public sector they are now planning to engage a representative from the private sector – to have all three sectors covered.

Ruth said: “Engaging with all three sectors will help build the strength of the group and maintain its survival.”

She added: “There are a lot of strategic bodies for equalities groups to be represented on and people say that if you’re trying to get reps from all the equalities strands onto all these different partnerships, that’s going to take a lot of people’s time.

“While it is time well spent, we need to get a lot smarter and stronger together as equalities communities – it’s so important that voices are heard and we need to collaborate together.”

Find out more

For more information on the Equalities Action Group visit <http://haveyoursay.bristolpartnership.org/the-partnership/equalities-action-group>

For information on Voscur visit <http://www.voscur.org>

And for information on the Bristol Partnership see <http://bristolpartnership.org>

Contact Ruth Pitter on 0117 909 9949 or ruth@voscur.org

March 2011

Voice and Echo in Wiltshire

A new way of working with local councillors

Eighteen Wiltshire town and parish councillors were the very first to use a discussion-based tool to improve both how they listen to – and speak for – their communities. To demonstrate the project’s success facilitator Karen Winchcombe, Voluntary Sector Consortium Manager at Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium, reported: “The councillors said it really opened their minds to how they represent their communities and asked if it’s the voice which shouts the loudest that gets heard the most.”

Background

The councillor training was part of Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium’s pilot programme to assist their community in building its capacity and confidence in order to influence decision-making. The Consortium consulted Changes – a national organisation which provides help and training on empowerment and influence. Changes has developed the Voice tool for voluntary and community organisations to map onto a horizontal and vertical “axis of influence” where they are in regard to their degree and capacity to influence outside agencies such as statutory bodies. The Echo tool has been

similarly devised for public agencies and partnerships to assess how open they are to community influence, in relation to their potential to respond to the communities they serve. Many voluntary and community organisations have used the Voice tool to prompt debate, identify factors for improvement and create action plans to increase their influence.

Changes trained 12 facilitators in Wiltshire in the use of the Voice tool, including Katie Fielding, County Secretary to Wiltshire Association of Local Councils.

Karen Winchcombe said: “Katie really liked the Voice tool but felt it had something missing to take to her work with local councillors. Councillors are really all things to all people – they come together as a council but most of their time is spent on their own as active citizens. They play a role in Echo as part of the councils they serve but also represent themselves as individuals, so needed to explore the Voice tool too.”

Because of this need for councillors to both listen and influence it was felt they should undertake both Voice and Echo programmes together. A consultation with Changes resulted in the devising of a new programme to bring together the two distinct tools for the first time.

Structure

The Voice and Echo programme was piloted with three town and parish councils across two evenings. On the first evening 10 town councillors worked with Sue Goring and Sal Hampson from Changes. On the second evening Marion Rayner, of Community First, and Debrah Biggs, of Wessex Community Action – two of the 12 facilitators who had received Changes training and from organisations within the Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium – delivered the same programme to eight parish councillors. The councillors

“The councillors said it really opened their minds to how they represent their communities and asked if it’s the voice which shouts the loudest that gets heard the most”



worked together to plot on the Voice axis the degree and the capacity which they felt they have influence as a voice for the communities they represent and, on the Echo axis, they plotted how open they are as a local council to community influence, in relation to their potential to respond to community influence.

Karen Winchcombe said: “It was a really good programme that seemed to be very successful in helping the councillors think about both the influence they have and their openness to community influence. The two tools seemed to naturally come together and it all worked really well. On both evenings the councillors said how it really opened their minds to how they respond to their communities. It will be interesting to measure the impact the programme has on the future work of the councillors.”

Success

The immediate success of the programme can be measured by the comments made by some of the councillors immediately after the training:

“It makes us, as a town council, think about community involvement – are we doing as much as we could to reach out and take on board what they say and to validate what they are saying?”

“A really interesting analytical tool to see what I am doing individually and what we as a town council are doing collectively. In particular, it is interesting – this idea of being proactive to support community groups to have a voice rather than wait for them to come to us.”

“It has been very, very useful and I want to take all of it back to all of our meetings and ask if we should be addressing things in a different way.”

Funding

Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium funded the councillor project at a total cost of £3,000. This covered the costs of Changes devising the programme to deliver the Voice and Echo tools together and delivery to the 18 councillors.



“In regard to the government’s new Localism Bill I believe there is even more need for Voice and Echo as a package for our local councillors – people on the ground have a voice which their local councillors can listen to and use to have a greater influence in their communities.”

The Consortium has been liaising with Wiltshire Council on the potential of it funding the programme for other councillors across the county.

Unfortunately, as with all Capacitybuilders funded projects, the future of the Consortium – and thus further development of this valuable Voice and Echo work – is very uncertain. Presently the Consortium is struggling for survival, although there are hopes to continue some of its work.

Advice for others

Karen Winchcombe said her and her colleagues found the Voice and Echo tools very powerful. She said: “It looks rigid and is ground in good theory but it can be adapted to anything and used within teams of people for lots of things, including performance management. I would thoroughly recommend its use for other organisations.”

Her advice to getting pilot projects off the ground was: “Just press on and get on with it. Instead of waiting around for your council to verify your project, get on with it and deliver.”

Future plans

Karen said: ‘I would like to see the Voice and Echo project rolled out across Wiltshire, through the town and parish councils and the Community Area Partnerships in Wiltshire. I have contacted Wiltshire Council to see if they would be interested in the training but progress is slow due to their own changing priorities in these difficult times of spending cuts.’

Katie Fielding, County Secretary to Wiltshire Association of Local Councils, is planning to map

how many of the other town and parish councillors (there are 253 across Wiltshire) wish to engage in the training that the pilot group received.

Karen added: “In regard to the government’s new Localism Bill I believe there is even more need for Voice and Echo as a package for our local councillors – people on the ground have a voice which their local councillors can listen to and use to have a greater influence in their communities.”

Find out more

For more information on the project visit www.wiltshireinfrastructureconsortium.org.uk

For more information on the Voice and Echo tools see <http://changesuk.net>

And for information on Wiltshire Association of Local Councils town visit www.wiltshire-alc.org.uk

Contact Karen Winchcombe on 01380 722475 or kwinchcombe@communityfirst.org.uk

March 2011

What does the future hold?

We asked survey respondents whether they thought the social purpose sector would have more or less influence in one year, and in five years. Whilst organisations are generally quite pessimistic about the near future, they appear from this survey to be much more optimistic for a future five years ahead.

Fifty per cent of respondents thought organisations would have less influence in a year's time, whilst 27% thought influence would stay about the same and just 13% thought the sector would have more influence over public bodies.

But when forecasting five years ahead the situation is perceived quite differently. Now 73% of respondents think the sector will have more influence whilst just 27% thought there would be less. No one thought the situation in five years time would be the same as now.

Ruth Shearn, Bournemouth CVS, felt that the situation would be about the same this time next year but much better in five years. She said: "Influencing our public sector colleagues is a long term game and doesn't just happen over night. I believe that in the last four years we have been very successful at raising our profile as equal partners at the table but there is always room to do more. Often our positive influence can be reliant on the personalities of statutory officers and when they leave this can put us back somewhat. I suspect that this time next year the picture may look very similar but I hope that in five years time we will have greater influence, be a stronger voice round the table and be viewed as a valued partner in delivering the 'Big Society' agenda."

The 'Big Society' was referenced by two other respondents to this question, who felt it would

hopefully bring influence for the social purpose sector – an impact that would be felt further into the future.

Karen Winchcombe, Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium, thought there would be less influence in the short term, but more in the long term. She said: "I think there will be, due to rapid change, a period of transition when public bodies will be adjusting to new cultures and budgeting which could lead to increased levels of commissioning. Therefore, the voice of the sector will continue to play a vital role in this, especially as it is often well placed to engage people into decision-making structures at a very local level."

Although there is quiet optimism for the long-term future of the sector, spending cuts are forcing organisations to look at their short-term survival and influence.

And Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS, added: "Reductions in funding and stripping away of formal partnership structures means that voluntary and community sector influence will be less about representation and more about 'specialist advisor' or involvement."

The future of Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) have been the main vehicle for dialogue between social purpose organisations and local public sector bodies since they were established a decade ago. However the change of government and spending cuts are resulting in major changes to these ways of partnership working, with 79% of respondents saying there were plans to change their Local Strategic Partnership. Most of these changes were to radically streamline and slim the partnership down, often at the expense of the social purpose sector involvement. Jay Talbot,

Devon Consortium, said the Devon Local Strategic Partnership was to be “severely slimmed down”.

In Somerset the Local Strategic Partnership has been formally suspended since October 2010 and its future is “uncertain and unresolved” and in Cornwall the fear is that a new partnership, as yet to be unveiled, “may not include voluntary and community sector representation”.

And in Gloucestershire, a county that has benefited from full VCS representation across the Local Strategic Partnership, a new slimmed down version of the Gloucestershire Conference (the county’s LSP) is being created which includes a new Leadership Group that excludes the social purpose sector.

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, said that there are emerging structures, particularly in health, that they feel may be more appropriate to have voluntary and community sector representation than the strategic partnership. She added: “We need a clear message nationally outlining that good practice will be to include voluntary sector representation on these boards – GP consortia, HealthWatch, Local Enterprise Partnerships etc – and that this representation needs infrastructure support behind it.”

“Reductions in funding and stripping away of formal partnership structures means that voluntary and community sector influence will be less about representation and more about ‘specialist advisor’ or involvement.”



The Care Forum:

Illustrating the Value of Specialist Infrastructure for Health and Social Care

The Care Forum is a voluntary and community sector (VCS) specialist health and social care infrastructure organisation based in Bristol and working primarily across Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Its members include voluntary and community organisations, statutory agencies and individuals.

It aims to promote health and social well being by enabling voluntary and community organisations and individuals to participate fully and equally in the planning and improvement of services, empowering individuals and groups to represent themselves and make informed choices, and improving people's access to health and social care services.

For individuals The Care Forum empowers adults and young people to voice issues about local health and social care services, provides an empowerment model of advocacy, and a Well Aware comprehensive directory of national and local groups, services and organisations with a dedicated signposting service and a mental health employment portal.

“The representatives keep everyone up to date with items on meeting agendas and the members feed back any issues to the representatives before and after the meetings.”

For both the statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations, The Care Forum provides channels of communication between commissioners and providers, consultation and networking opportunities, independent facilitation and events management, and specialist advice on policy development and implementation as it impacts on the health and social care voluntary sector. It also promotes good practice in models for meaningful consultation, inclusive patient and public participation, independent reporting at NHS consultations and the organisation of voluntary sector representation in multi-agency forums.

Structure

Four teams work within The Care Forum: two specialist infrastructure support teams, Information and Research and Voluntary Sector Services; and two direct services, Advocacy and LINKs. The Voluntary Sector Services team provides 'voice and influence' specifically for the health and social care voluntary sector. Four co-ordinators, one for each of the four local authority areas in which the team works, run voluntary sector networks for health and social care, older people, mental health and children and young people. These VCS networks meet three times a year, reduced from four owing to spending cuts since March 2011. The networks provide opportunities for organisations to get together and exchange ideas and information. They also give a voice to the voluntary and community sector and a forum for talking with the statutory sector.

Representation

The Care Forum's network members elect VCS representatives on to strategic boards. Presently, there are around 90 VCS representatives across the



Small portions
available
Daily lunch specials
All types of
sandwiches and jacket
potatoes with various
fillings available.
Special dietary needs
by request.
Parties ordered for
weekly orders taken.

four local authority areas, sitting on 75 multi-agency health and social care groups. Representatives are accountable to the sector and required to report back to network meetings and through e-bulletins. Representatives follow a full induction programme and undergo exit interviews when they move on. When they are sitting on multi-agency partnerships and PCT boards they are there in the capacity of a VCS representative, not of a particular voluntary sector provider or their own organisation, but as a voice for the whole of the voluntary and community sector in their area.

Kate Oliver, the Voluntary Sector Services Manager, said: “The representatives keep everyone up to date with items on meeting agendas and the members feed back any issues to the representatives before and after the meetings. This creates a circular feedback system that helps to amplify the voice of the sector.”

The Care Forum runs meetings to acknowledge the representatives’ contributions and to make the time for peer and specialist support through the exchange of ideas and experience and developing their strategic skills. A recent issue that arose at these

The case for specialist support to the sector to influence and navigate these changes on behalf of vulnerable service users has never been stronger.”

lunchtime meetings was the frequency with which VCS interventions at meetings were not recorded in meeting minutes. Advice was shared on how representatives could take this up with the chair so that they had their support when they proposed amendments at the next meeting.

Success

Such a solid representation across so many health and social care strategic boards has resulted in many successes.

When sitting on the Maternity and New Born Services Review for the Bristol Health plan, for North Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire, the VCS representatives were able to support the extent to which equalities factors were included in the review and the quality of the information. Initially the planners had not looked at transport access to the new maternity and neonatal services hub. The VCS rep requested that an equalities impact analysis was carried out on transport access and as a result the group became more aware of the transport implications in terms of planning for the future. The rep also encouraged additional focus groups to inform the service planning, for example one with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual service users.

In Bath and North East Somerset the VCS representatives on the older people network were instrumental in providing service users with more of a voice in the social care procurement process. And on the South Gloucestershire Children and Young People Safeguarding Board the VCS representative successfully proposed the continuation of free safeguarding training for voluntary and community sector organisations.

The planners had not looked at transport access to the new maternity and neonatal services hub. The VCS rep requested that an equalities impact analysis was carried out.

Funding

Across its work streams, The Care Forum is funded by the primary care trusts and local authorities in Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Particular projects attract additional grant funding from organisations such as the Department of Health, Children England and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

At present, however, The Care Forum's overall income for infrastructure support this year is one third lower than last year's funding. This 30% reduction in funding for infrastructure support has equated to a loss of 2.5 days work a week, two networks cut and a reduction by a quarter of network meeting frequencies.

After 20 years of supporting specialist infrastructure support, the recent re-commissioning of infrastructure services in Bristol by the city council has resulted in block funding to one generic infrastructure organisation, and the withdrawal of all funding for both The Care Forum's specialist health and social care and children and young people infrastructure support in the city, and for the specialist BME infrastructure organisation.

Future plans

The coalition government's Health and Social Care Bill, if its massive overhaul of the NHS goes ahead, will have a significant impact on the work of The Care Forum. For example, the number of health and social care commissioner and provider agencies will increase which amounts to an additional burden on the voluntary sector. Relations with the newly developing community health social enterprises, the GP reference groups, the GP commissioning boards locally and their

sub regional and regional groups will all need some form of communication channels and partnership or contracted working with the voluntary and community sector.

Kate said: "This bill will have a serious impact on the sector including a hiatus in funding, working relationships, partnership working and communications. If funding is cut, even if temporarily, at the end of this year, we will struggle to find the capacity to make the most of the potential opportunities available to the voluntary sector and The Care Forum. The case for specialist support to the sector to influence and navigate these changes on behalf of vulnerable service users has never been stronger."

Find out more

The Care Forum
The Vassall Centre
Gill Avenue
Fishponds
Bristol
BS16 2QQ

Tel: 0117 965 4444

Email: admin@thecareforum.org.uk
www.thecareforum.org

kateoliver@thecareforum.org.uk

Tel: 0117 958 9336

May 2011

How are spending cuts affecting involvement in decision making?

The government's spending cuts are being harshly felt across the South West social purpose sector. All respondents acknowledged a bumpy time ahead with massive cuts to the sector as the government tightens the public purse on all local authorities. Somerset County Council has withdrawn all its funding to voluntary sector infrastructure organisations and Cornwall County Council has announced a 30% cut to sector funds.

All this means that resources for voice and representation are at risk, meaning fewer events, less staff time for outreach to small and marginalised groups, and less dialogue between the public and social purpose sector.

In Bristol, Voscur's Wendy Stephenson said that, although their contract includes support for social purpose sector voice: "There is already pressure to ensure this is the least funded of the support services that will be delivered. There is more of a focus on capacity building."

Dorset Community Action is also at risk of losing funding for its Voice project. Katy Pascoe said: "We are receiving lots of acknowledgment for the value of the work that the sector does, but no commitments to continue funding it. We know of at least one contract that is definitely not being renewed – a young people's Advice and Information Centre run by the Children's Society whose Chief Executive is a valued, effective sector rep on two boards within the Children's Trust. It is likely he will step down from that role in April."

At the Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS Jess McQuail said that messages from Gloucestershire County Council seemed to indicate that they will be less interested in voice and more in the VCS Assembly

providing information and intelligence – "a portal to communicate to the voluntary and community sector" and advise on particular issues."

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, said that all spending cuts had the potential to affect their voice and representation role. She added: "Whilst we have a Service Level Agreement until March 2012 the fund from which we are supported (Performance Reward Grant) was cut like many other key funds last summer. We are currently working on a set of proposals to determine how we will function in the future and hope to progress this work. Aside from the Plymouth Third Sector Consortium there is no formal or informal route for the sector to engage, influence and work with the public and private sectors."

What difference will the 'Big Society' make?

We asked respondents whether the 'Big Society' concept is changing the way public bodies relate to social purpose organisations. Many expressed a sense that local authorities were using the 'Big Society' concept to push through more cuts to the social purpose sector and deliver services more cheaply.

Jess McQuail, Gloucestershire Assembly, said: "Some are focusing on developing the voluntary and community sector market and see the importance of building relationships, others are seeing the voluntary and community sector as a way to provide services on the cheap or for free, with less focus on the sector as equal partners, more as service providers (ironically!)"

David Stapleton, of Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership, said: "At Somerset County Council the only driver appears to be saving money. All district councils are reducing or struggling



to maintain their support for the sector. What Big Society??”

Ruth Walls, Plymouth Third Sector Consortium, said: “At present there are many differing views, the speed at which cuts and savings have to be achieved has hampered our ability to truly plan how we can take ‘Big Society’ from rhetoric to reality.”

Others expressed cautious optimism about opportunities the ‘Big Society’ idea might bring.

In Wiltshire, Karen Winchcombe, Wiltshire VCS Assembly, said: “There is much talk of ‘Big Society’ and the increased opportunities for the sector; the VCS play a large role in delivering services in the heart of the community and we have much to offer in this moving forward.”

Seniz Ismet, Voice Development Voluntary Action in Swindon, said: “In my view, the ‘Big Society’ concept was always there and very much a part of UK society, but I hope the emphasis and backing of government will give it a strength and position.”

Christopher Beale, Poole CVS, added: “I think it is difficult to comment on public bodies in general, as so many individuals are involved. For example, some people in both sectors welcome the potential opportunities and freedom more local decision-

making could provide whereas others still talk about wanting more guidance and direction from government. The ‘Big Society’ has helped once again in emphasising the importance of the sector.”

Lydia Billson, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, was cautiously optimistic about the opportunities the ‘Big Society’ may provide. She said: “It is offering up new opportunities, for example, the creation of a Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Board. It has changed some of the rhetoric of the local authorities so that they appear to be more open to a different role for the sector, but it is still early days.”

Other challenges

Many respondents commented on the difficulty in supporting social purpose organisations to influence decision making when there was such a fast pace of change in the public sector.

Wendy Stephenson, Voscur, said: “The rate of change taking place from the government at the moment is making it near impossible to a) understand and absorb all the information b) communicate this to the local voluntary and community sector in a clear and transparent way and c) undertake consultation with and represent the views of the sector. It feels as though we’re drowning in a tidal wave of government-induced changes.”

“There is concern about the speed of changes to funding and policy and the lack of details and opportunity to influence these key decisions... and that the relationship achieved so far between the statutory and voluntary sectors will change considerably at a time when capacity is reducing”

Katy Pascoe, Dorset Community Action, said that at a recent event hosted by their Voice project many fears were raised. She said: “There is concern in Dorset about the speed of changes to funding and policy and the lack of details and opportunities to influence these key decisions. There is concern that the relationship achieved so far between the statutory and voluntary sector will change considerably at a time when capacity and infrastructure within the sector is reducing, due to funding shortfalls.

“There was also worry over the assumption that volunteering is a free resource and concerns that rural areas have less volunteer resources, due to smaller populations and greater issues around accessibility, so resources will need to be targeted to ensure rural inclusion.

“Questions raised included; How can we prepare for change and influence decisions? Who can we turn to? How can we keep up to date? What structures will exist and how can we engage with them? How can we prevent the most vulnerable members of society from slipping through the net?”

In Somerset – where the county council has announced huge cuts to the sector and ceased all funding to infrastructure organisations – David Stapleton said his organisation, Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership, will cease to exist.

He said: “Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership Board has taken the decision to close at the end of the financial year, as Somerset County Council and NHS Somerset cannot offer any core funding, and Capacitybuilders is closing at the end of March 2011. The charity’s position is neither financially viable nor sustainable; and as such it is debatable whether it can be ‘fit for purpose’ and add

significant value to the voluntary and community sector in Somerset.”

A press release posted on the Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership website on February 28 2011, reads: “It is a shame that just when the coalition government are promoting the Big Society, Somerset’s infrastructure support body is closing due to a lack of funding. The closure of SCIPP leaves Somerset without a voluntary and community sector infrastructure support organisation at this crucial time of budget cuts, when better coordination and collaborative-working could have helped the sector to continue providing quality services to Somerset’s communities.”

Wendy Stephenson, Voscur, said they were in the process of forming a new voluntary and community sector assembly for Bristol (not simply a Voscur Assembly) as part of a new support service for the sector. She added: “The main issue that we need to make sure the sector’s voice is heard is for government to ensure that there is a fully ‘compact compliant’ consultation period for the voluntary and community sector. For example the Localism Bill has just been released without any clear consultation process for what are huge changes, challenges and opportunities for voluntary and community sector groups.”

Social purpose organisations are rising admirably to current challenges, but there is only so much they can do to mitigate the impact of spending cuts and respond to the pace of changes to legislation, policy and the organisation of the public sector.



Voluntary Sector Forum on a shoestring:

Success in North Somerset

North Somerset Voluntary Sector Forum meetings have become so popular that people are queuing up to speak at them. This success has been built on the smallest of budgets and is a great example of what can be achieved with limited resources.

Background

The forum is organised by Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS) – a support network for the voluntary sector. It was established to strengthen the voice of the sector at a strategic level – working with statutory bodies including North Somerset Council, the Health Service and the police. Membership of the forum, and VANS, is open to all voluntary and community groups and social enterprises in the area. It brings people together to discuss, identify and promote interests and concerns. It also gives members opportunities to work with other sectors through the North Somerset Partnership and other local or regional bodies.

North Somerset is a predominantly rural unitary authority. It has a population of 204,700 – 70%

“We always have good attendance at the meetings. They are not just about internal problems – we usually have speakers and workshops involving public sector agencies.”

of which live in the main towns of Weston-super-Mare, Portishead, Clevedon and Nailsea.

More than 120 of the 750 registered charities in North Somerset are members of VANS. There is also a possible additional 250/ 500 voluntary groups not registered as charities.

Structure

The forum usually meets at The Campus community building in Weston-super-Mare three times a year. All members are invited and around 40 to 50 attend each meeting.

Bob Snow, Chief Executive of VANS, said: “We always have good attendance at the meetings. They are not just about internal problems – we usually have speakers and workshops involving public sector agencies discussing their future plans and initiatives. We have recently called an extra event on commissioning services – and how to prepare organisations for commissioning in this present climate.”

A steering group of representatives from forum members – currently Community Action, North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau, TENONS environmental network, North Somerset Housing and Somerset Racial Equality Council – meets every other month to oversee the organisation and direction of the forum.

Success

Through the forum meetings, members have gained more knowledge and understanding of statutory bodies, and the way decisions impact on their communities.



Bob said: “People have come to the forum with little knowledge on the policy making and planning that affects people in North Somerset. Through the forum they are now far more aware of the priorities of statutory bodies and how it affects them and the organisations they are involved in.

“Every session is evaluated and the meetings are consistently very highly regarded.”

Through their Reaching Out/ Linking In project VANS has identified hard to reach and hard to hear groups who have become forum members.

Funding

The Voluntary Sector Forum has been running at a cost of £5,000 per annum for three years. Funding was granted from the government agency Capacitybuilders, which ceased to exist from the end of March 2011. The funding pays for one member of staff to work four hours a week and covers costs and refreshments for the forum meetings.

“Forums should be made dynamic and useful – rather than just tea and biscuits and a moan. Our forum meetings have been so successful we’ve had people queuing to speak at them.”

Advice for others

Bob believes that the success of the forum lies in the structure of the meetings. He said: “We have made our meetings interesting and as attractive to people as possible. I would advise anyone involved in organising forums such as ours to keep their finger on the pulse to make sure they’re giving people what they require.

“Forums should be made dynamic and useful – rather than just tea and biscuits and a moan. Our forum meetings have been so successful we’ve had people queuing to speak at them.”

Future plans

Funding for the forum finished in March 2011, although Bob hoped North Somerset Council would continue to finance it.

He said: “It’s a vital link between the voluntary sector and partners and has proved extremely valuable as a communications tool.

“The council sees the validity of the forum but is under extreme pressure with funding cuts of 28% looming. They are in a state of funding purdah at the moment – we will have to wait and see.”

As Chief Executive of VANS Bob will continue to speak for the voluntary and community sector in his position as representative on the North Somerset Partnership, including the sole representative of the sector on the Executive Board.

He said: “The challenge is in persuading public and private partners that there is a need for us to build capacity within the voluntary and community sector.



The sector is often seen as a homogenous group – 750 registered charities is not a homogenous group. When people say, “we would like the sector to do this” it makes no sense in terms of delivery. Contact with the sector through the forum has been really useful to help challenge this perception and is another good reason to keep the forum going.”

Find out more

For more information on the forum see www.vansweb.org.uk/cms/index.php?page=voluntary-sector-forum

For information on Voluntary Action North Somerset visit www.vansweb.org.uk

Contact Bob Snow on 01934 410191 or bob.snow@vansmail.org.uk

March 2011

Conclusion and recommendations

This report has looked at the relationship between social purpose and public sector organisations. It is particularly important at the moment because funding cuts mean that support for social purpose organisations to have a voice is declining.

Our survey and case studies indicated many examples of the positive effects of involving social purpose organisations in public decision-making. For example key services have been kept running, policy improved to protect children from harm and abuse, and a culture of dialogue and engagement has been developed.

We have identified many creative and effective methods used to help social purpose organisations to have a voice and be represented in public decision-making, including postcards to engage small groups, robust accountability mechanisms and forums successfully run on a shoestring.

However we also found that much more needs to be done to include marginalised groups. Asylum seekers and refugees, Gypsies & Travellers, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, migrant workers and women's organisations seemed least involved in voluntary sector forums and assemblies.

Focus on those groups that are excluded from decision making and target them to make sure they are involved in voluntary sector assemblies and forums.

This report was compiled during a particularly difficult time of spending cuts and changes to the social purpose sector. Most of the organisations questioned were facing tough decisions, redundancies and even, in the case of Somerset, total closure. It was felt that the voice and representation element of their work was being particularly badly hit.

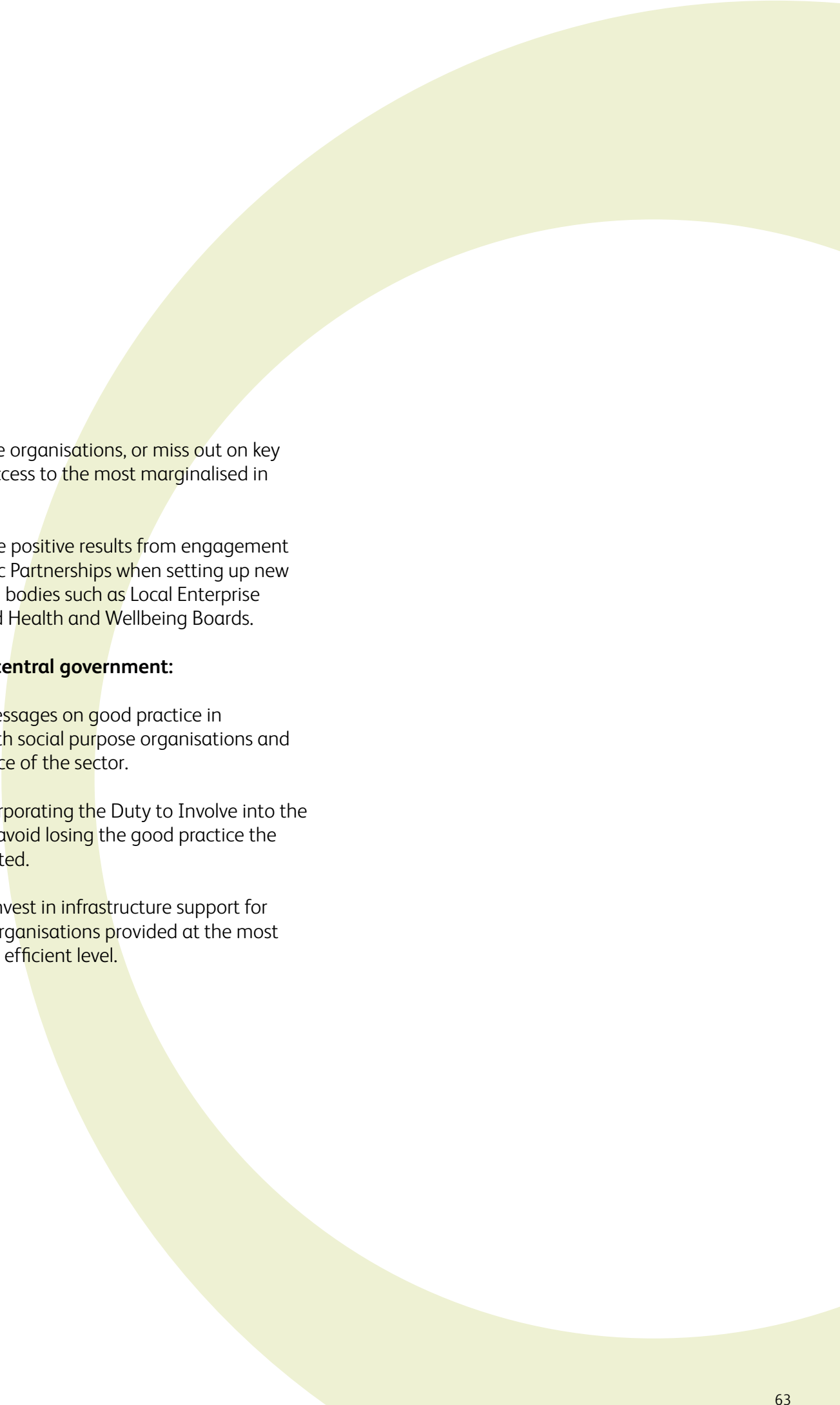
Recommendations

Infrastructure organisations supporting social purpose groups:

- Learn from what others are doing, and consider adopting some of the methods highlighted in this report and case studies, such as Dorset's 'Bug' postcards for engaging small community groups; Bristol's tried and tested selection and accountability mechanisms for its Equality Action Group; or Voluntary Action North Somerset's experience running its voluntary sector forum on a shoestring.
- Continue to make the case for accountability, and social purpose organisations' involvement in public sector decision-making.
- Focus on those groups that are excluded from decision making and target them to make sure they are involved in voluntary sector assemblies and forums.
- Be flexible in changing times – focus on different ways to influence, not just on traditional forms of representation.

Local public bodies, Health and Well Being Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships:

- Invest in community engagement and involvement



of social purpose organisations, or miss out on key expertise and access to the most marginalised in the community.

- Learn from the positive results from engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships when setting up new decision-making bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Ministers and central government:

- Send clear messages on good practice in engagement with social purpose organisations and the independence of the sector.

- Consider incorporating the Duty to Involve into the Localism Bill, to avoid losing the good practice the duty has supported.

- Continue to invest in infrastructure support for social purpose organisations provided at the most appropriate and efficient level.

Further resources

The following is a non-exhaustive list of reports relevant to social purpose sector voice and representation in the South West. Where online reports are available, they are all linked from South West Forum's website at <http://www.southwestforum.org.uk/voiceinfluence>

A Firmer Foundation: new community-based evidence from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered populations in the rural south west peninsula, Intercom Trust, 2006 .

Counting the Cost, Understanding the Benefit: Children and Young People's VCS infrastructure support in the South West, Regional Youth Work Unit / Children England, 2011

Directory of Migrant Workers Support Services in the South West, Equality South West, 2010

Empowering Communities of Interest: An examination of the structures for enabling equality groups to be heard within public sector policy making and service provision, Equality South West, undated.

Engagement and Empowerment among Black and Minority Ethnic and other Equalities Communities in the South West Of England: A Case Study, Evaluation Trust / South West Foundation, undated.

Participation and Empowerment of Children and Young People in the South West: A Case Study, Evaluation Trust / South West Foundation, undated.

Equality and Diversity in Local Area Agreements: A report by Equality South West on the extent to which effective consultation has taken place around equality and diversity, in developing Local Area

Agreements in the South West, Equality South West, 2008

Mapping the Black Community and Voluntary Sector in the South West of England: The role of the Black South West Network in a regional context, 2006.

No Boundaries: A study of networks and empowerment, South West Foundation, 2008.

Real partnerships – Real impact: A snapshot of partnership working that has had an impact where it counts on the ground, for local residents, South West Forum, 2010.

South West Sub Sectoral Research, South West Forum, 2008

Third Sector Engagement in 2007-2008 Local Area Agreements in the South West Region, South West Forum / Black South West Network, 2008.

Appendix 1 – Survey questions

How Strong is our Voice survey – December 2010

How Strong Is Our Voice?

Thank you very much for your time on this survey.

South West Forum is carrying out an audit of how strong and inclusive voluntary and community sector voice is across the South West, and how things are changing. We will produce a report including examples of different ways of organising representation, and outlining some of our sector's achievements in influencing decisions.

The aims of the survey are to:

- Determine how strong the voice of the social purpose sector is in each unitary or county area across the South West.
- Explore how well marginalised groups are included in voluntary sector assemblies and forums and what support is needed to improve this.
- Gather examples of achievements made by social purpose organisations in influencing public sector decisions.
- Temperature check on how the sector feels Big Society and spending cuts are affecting voice and empowerment

The survey is focusing on county/unitary level representation, not district or town/parish level. We have invited one organisation from each local authority area to complete the survey. This survey is part of our Lottery Funded project, Stronger Voice, Greater Influence. You can fill in the survey yourself, which takes 20 minutes online. Alternatively we can call you to complete it over the phone.

If you are unsure of any of the answers you can leave them blank.

If you have any questions or would like to complete the survey by phone or in any other format, please contact Isabel Livingstone, Voice and Influence Co-ordinator, on 01752 588994 or 07792 206741, or by email at isabel@southwestforum.org.uk

Many thanks.

About Voice In Your Area

1. Local authority area
2. Contact person
3. Phone and email
4. Name of voice/representation project, assembly or forum
5. Organisation or accountable body (if different from above)
6. Partners (if any)
7. How many staff support your forum/assembly/voice project? (please say if they are part-time)
8. How long has your organisation been supporting voluntary and community sector representatives?
9. If applicable, how long has the forum/assembly been up and running?
10. How is your rep support/forum/assembly funded, and for how long?
11. What is your website address?
12. Can you share your terms of reference and other key documents? Please provide details here and links if you have them, if not we'll contact you by email.

How Strong Is Your Voice

1. How many voluntary sector representatives are there on your Local Strategic Partnership (or county strategic partnership)?

Board level

Thematic/sub-group level

2. How are representatives selected or appointed (including adhoc selection)?

3. Are there any public sector boards/decision making bodies without voluntary sector representatives?

4. In your area, how are public bodies involving voluntary organisations in decisions about how to make spending cuts, if at all?

5. How involved were voluntary organisations in developing a Local Enterprise Partnership proposal for your area?

6. Can you give any examples of public bodies changing their decisions or behaviour as a result of voluntary organisations having a voice with the local public bodies? (For example have you been able to influence any decisions on funding or cuts, have services been improved, have you got or kept issues on the agenda that would not have been noticed otherwise)

How Inclusive Is Your Voice

1. How involved were the following groups in your voluntary sector assembly, forum or network over the past 12 months?

2. Please describe how they were involved

3. What steps, if any, have you taken to make your sector's voice inclusive?
diversity reference group

4. Do you need any support to help make your sector's voice more inclusive? If so what would be useful?

5. Any other comments?

About Skills And Capacity

1. To what extent does your organisation have the skills and knowledge to empower small, volunteer-led organisations to influence public authorities?

2. What would help you to empower small, volunteer-led organisations to increase their influence?

3. To what extent does your organisation have the skills and knowledge to empower equality-focussed organisations to influence public authorities?

4. What would help you to empower equality-focussed organisations to increase their influence?

The Future

1. Do you think voluntary organisations will have more or less influence, or about the same, over public bodies in your area ...

...in one year?

...in five years?

Any comments

2. Are there plans to change the Local Strategic Partnership in your area? Please give details.

3. How are your local authorities spending cuts affecting voluntary and community sector voice?

4. In what ways, if any, is the Big Society concept changing the way public bodies relate to voluntary and community organisations?

5. Any other comments?

And Finally...

1. Do you have any news, examples or key achievements you'd like to share with others? (you can flag them up here and we will contact you for more information)

2. Do you have any other comments?

	Not involved	Slightly involved (eg on mailing list or have come to one event)	Involved (eg as a representative on in an equality sub-group)	Very involved (eg on project board/ executive)	Don't know
Asylum seeker/ refugee groups					
Black and minority ethnic groups					
Children and young people's groups					
Disabled people's groups					
Gypsy and traveller groups					
LGB and trans groups					
Migrant workers' groups					
Older people's groups					
Religion or belief groups					
Rural groups					
Women's groups					
Volunteer-led community groups					
Any other marginalised groups? (specify)					

Appendix 2 – List of participants

Survey

Christopher Beale	Poole CVS
Lydia Billson	Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum
Helen Black	CVS South Gloucestershire
Janice Fortune	Develop
Seniz Ismet	Voluntary Action Swindon
Jess McQuail	Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS
Janette Oxley	Torcom
Katy Pascoe	Dorset Community Action
Ruth Shearn	Bournemouth CVS
Bob Snow	Voluntary Action North Somerset
David Stapleton	Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership (SCIPP)
Wendy Stephenson	Voscur
Jay Talbot	Devon Consortium
Ruth Walls	Plymouth Third Sector Consortium
Karen Winchcombe	Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium

Case studies

Katie Fielding	Wiltshire Association of Local Councils
Meryl Hecquet	GROW Wiltshire
Jess McQuail	Gloucestershire Assembly for the VCS
Kate Oliver	The Care Forum
Katy Pascoe	Dorset Community Action
Ruth Pitter	Voscur
Bob Snow	Voluntary Action North Somerset
David Stapleton	Somerset Community Infrastructure Providers Partnership (SCIPP)
Karen Winchcombe	Wiltshire Infrastructure Consortium



South West Forum is the voice for the 70,000 social purpose organisations in the South West. We support groups to improve their effectiveness, maintain their independence, be collaborative and have real influence.

For a copy of this document in large print or other formats please contact
admin@southwestforum.org.uk
or 01392 247901



Access this publication on your smartphone by scanning this QR code



© South West Forum, 2011

South West Forum
Unit A1, Phase 1
University of Exeter
Rennes Drive
Exeter EX4 4RN

01392 247901
admin@southwestforum.org.uk
www.southwestforum.org.uk



August 2011

Registered Charity 1102082. Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England Company No 4978095 Registered Office as above. Design: blu inc (bluinc.co.uk).