

VCS Voices Hub: Representative Protocols

Twice yearly WIC run VCS Representatives Leadership and Listening Events. At the last, in February 2010, we consulted on the 'VCS Representative Protocols' (formally called 'Code of Conduct'). These protocols offer a shared agreement on representative best practice. There were minor alterations but it was agreed that WIC ask each newly recruited VCS representative to sign these protocols during their formal representatives' induction. Visit: http://www.winc.org.uk/the_tools_of_representation

Reporting Serious Incidents

Charities need to be aware of new requirements introduced by the Charity Commission with the launch of the Annual Return in 2010.

It is the responsibility of trustees to report serious incidents to the Commission as soon as they become aware of them. Cases of actual or suspected harm of beneficiaries, including incidents relating to the protection of children, young people or vulnerable adults, must be reported to the Charity Commission as well as to the regulatory bodies. Issues of serious fraud and theft from a charity must also be reported. As part of their Annual Return trustees of charities with an income over £25,000 must now sign a declaration that there are no serious incidents that should have brought to the attention of the Charity Commission. If trustees are unable to make this declaration then the Annual Return is not complete and they will have not met their legal responsibilities. For more information go to the Charity Commission website at: <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/>

Don't miss out!

The role of WIC members is to support VCS groups and organisations. Some members are locally based; others have a county-wide focus. It is worth VCS groups and organisations ensuring they are on the mailing list of a WIC member so that they have regular access to information (including funding opportunities) and details of events and training sessions. Go to the WIC website for contact details of the member organisations: www.winc.org.uk

The Compact Keeps Working for Us

The Worcestershire COMPACT, the agreement between the statutory sector and VCS on best working practice and relations, is continuing to grow. This month is seeing two consultations on the: 'Code on Consultation, Involvement & Voice' and the 'Conciliation Code' with response deadlines of 21st September 2010. Sally Ellison, WIC member and Chair of the COMPACT Steering Group said, 'both Nationally and in Worcestershire the COMPACT has continued to develop.' For details visit: <http://www.winc.org.uk/>

WIC Members Are:

Age Concern Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN)

Community Action Wyre Forest

Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Droitwich Spa and Rural Council for Voluntary Service

Community Action Malvern and District

Pershore Volunteer Centre

Evesham Volunteer Centre

Worcester Volunteer Centre

Worcestershire Association of Voluntary Organisations in Community Care

Worcestershire Council for Voluntary Youth Services

Worcestershire Racial Equality Council

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NEWS FOR THE
VOLUNTARY AND
COMMUNITY SECTOR IN
WORCESTERSHIRE

THEVOICE

Note from the WIC Chair

A change in government heralds new thinking. The voluntary and community sector must be awake to differences in the environment. Already there are some clear messages. The 'Big Society', allowing charities and social enterprises to provide public services and devolving power to neighbourhoods, may provide opportunities for some VCS organisations. The reorganisation of the health services may impact on those who have contracts with PCTs. It could also provide opportunities for smaller locally-based groups. *Report continued page 3...*

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this issue

The Big Society Agenda and the VCS

The Compact Keeps Working For You

Reporting Serious Incidents

WIC Delivers Volunteer Events Across the County

WIC Partner LDAs (Local Development Agencies) have been running district events which promoted volunteering, and thanked volunteers for the positive social impact of their work. For example, in Bromsgrove and Redditch WIC member BARN held 'Volunteers' Fortnight' (31st May - 11th June) and were asked by Bromsgrove District Council to invite their groups to provide some volunteering opportunities for BDC staff and elected members during Volunteers Week.

While Worcester Volunteer Centre celebrated the value of volunteering, and promoted opportunities, at Worcester Volunteering Fair (June the 4th) - pictured above. The WIC Chair noted, 'Volunteers make a vital contribution within our community. Many services rely on their skills and commitment. Volunteering also has many benefits for the individual. The Volunteer Centres and other WIC members help to develop and identify opportunities and match potential volunteers at neighbourhood, district and county levels.'

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Listening /Leadership Event: 12-2pm Thursday 30th September 2010. We invite any individuals who represent the sector at district or county levels to discuss any issues, share experience and help us shape the support systems for representatives. For further details contact: Jim J Smith at wavocc@btconnect.com

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THEVOICE

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Worcestershire
Infrastructure Consortium

The VCS VOICES HUB

During this quarter a number of VCS representatives have been placed across the statutory sector including:

John Taylor (WIC) and Keith Sherman (WAVOCC) on the Choice and Control Strategic Partnership. Liz Lloyd (WAC/WAVOCC) on the Partners in Care Board. Via our election processes, Mark Jackson (St Richards Hospice/WAVOCC) on NHS Worcestershire's End of Life Commissioning Executive.

We also have five new representative opportunities on Worcestershire Partnership's Funding and Procurement Task and Finish Group, and another single seat on NHS Worcestershire's Tobacco Control Alliance. For the related timescales and documents please visit:
http://www.winc.org.uk/representation_opportunities

The Big Society Agenda, What Does it Mean for our Sector?

In the last few years we have heard much talk of greater Government reliance on The VCS to deal with the big issues of society. But now is a time of great uncertainty; with the impact of the recession taking hold, and just when we are being called on for so much more...

On the 19th of May, The Government launched 'The Big Society Agenda'. This policy document states, 'We will support the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises, and support these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services.'

On the 19th of July David Cameron announced his vision for a 'Big Society Bank', whereby dormant bank accounts will have funds transferred. The Co-op estimates that the first distribution will be in the region of £60m-£100m. He plans to use funds to enable charities, social enterprises and voluntary

groups to take over the running of public services. But the questions have to be asked: Are the VCS ready to expand? When will we be ready?

NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) have only this month come up with an estimate of cuts saying, 'The voluntary sector can expect imminent cuts of £100m!'. While Capacitybuilders' recent survey of local support providers found: 'we have more demand, greater forthcoming pressures on income, and imminent staff cuts; but half of us state we are 'coping well!'

"Is this a serious crisis we shouldn't let go to waste?"

In a June 2010 talk to RAISE, John Harris, of NAVCA asked 'is this a serious crisis we shouldn't let go to waste?' He Continued.. 'More than ever we need to demonstrate

that we can work as partners with an eye to the bigger strategic picture, we need to develop the business case...(when) Scaling Up for the Big Society'.

Mr.Harris also noted the same business case development as essential for VCS Infrastructure partnerships such as WIC.

Sally Cupitt of the Charities Evaluation Services concurs in her report 'Demonstrating the Difference' when writing, 'It is becoming increasingly important for infrastructure organisations, especially those funded through Regional Development Agencies and Local Authorities, to be able to demonstrate economic, social and environmental outcomes in relation to government targets.'

Meanwhile, and in our provincial world, we have Worcestershire and our own sets of social priorities. But, what is sure is that the twin issues of financial climate and The Big Society will place their shadow, or light, across our sector...and soon.
J.J Smith

WIC's Business Support Offer to Your Organisation

Some of you told us, in part via our recent User Survey, you were unsure what Business Support you can access from WIC members. In a nutshell, it is a wide range of generic and specialist information, support and advice, tailored to large or small voluntary organisations and groups, and also social enterprises and community groups. It encompasses:

- Supporting you in running your organisation to work in a way which is more enterprising including: work or business planning, identifying your funding options, managing the finances, employment law, managing and developing staff and volunteers, collaborative working, and contracting with your local authority;
- Access to office facilities and meeting venues;
- Specialist coaching to social enterprises to help you identify how your business can deliver your social or environmental aims, developing your business plan, choosing the right legal structure and a sustainable financial strategy and employing staff;
- Advice on good governance, developing your board of trustees, quality standards and demonstrating your social or environmental impact;
- WIC Members also deliver training on the above areas, as well as health and safety, first aid and manual handling, amongst others;

Contact: your local WIC member, or initially Sophie Mead to be signposted on:

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Email: sophiem@comfirst.org.uk

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...The economic situation cannot be ignored. Grants and contracts may be harder to access. People may be less able to donate.

The needs of the vulnerable cannot be placed to one side, in order to best serve them the sector must be alive to the changes and adapt the way it responds so that the work can continue.

Short-Term Representatives

With the recent rapid growth of the Short-term Representative Bank, who most usually sit on ad-hoc funding decision making panels, we have begun work on a specific induction and training package. Undertaking the work of a short-term representative can give a good sense of funding applications from a commissioners' perspective, and can act as a stepping stone to representative roles within both countywide and district Partnerships.

Ready to Respond



Volunteers demonstrated their skills at the Ready to Respond event at County Hall last month. Organised with the County Council's Emergency Planning Team, VCS organisations from the County Volunteers Emergency Committee (CVEC) demonstrated how they would respond to an emergency.

A mock emergency situation teams showed their skills in action. Workshops demonstrating VCS capability in:

- Welfare, emotional and spiritual support
- Medical & therapeutic support
- Communications, logistics, search & rescue
- Community recovery

Chair of CVEC, Jeremy Voaden (British Red Cross), said "The event showed our colleagues in the emergency services and the local authorities what we have to offer in terms of people and equipment".