

Minutes

Meeting time and date: **Wednesday 1st March 2006, 11.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m.**

Location: **Cabinet Room D, Preston County Hall**

Present

Christine Jones (Volunteer Centre Warrington), Chris Huffee (Volunteer Centre Liverpool), Claire Hignett (Salford Social Services), Dusanka Rushton (National Association of Hospital & Community Friends), Emile Pinel (North West Network), Karen Tonge (Sports Volunteering North West), Jill Kershaw (Leonard Cheshire), Julie Sumner (Lancashire County Council), Margaret Cheverst (Volunteer Centre Eden), Laura Hamilton (George House Trust), Malcolm Kennedy (North West Development Agency), Sharon Brearley (Age Concern)

In attendance

Andy Forster (Volunteering England), Chris Penberthy (Volunteering England), Louise Norgate (Volunteering England)

Apologies

Dave Rydings (National Neighbourhood Watch Association), David Kay (Lloyds TSB Foundations), Dorothy Shears (Volunteer Centres Hyndburn & Ribble Valley), Michelle McNamee / Helen Bullough (Big Lottery Fund), Shughie Morrison (Millennium Volunteers), Rob Jackson (Volunteering England), Sharon Wilkinson (Government Office for the North West), Tim Duckmanton (Lake District National Park Authority)

1 Welcome

Chris Penberthy introduced himself as interim Chair and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the EVDC in the North West.

2 England Volunteering Development Council

Chris Penberthy outlined the background to the EVDC and its regional bodies:

National EVDC

- Created in late 2004
- Designed to be a voice for the volunteering sector as a whole – a broad based, representative constituency
- Providing a separate communications channel to Volunteering England's work on behalf of the sector
- Chaired independently to provide effective balance to all voices on the council

Regional EVDCs

- National council felt that still broader coverage was needed – enable the council to be more representative and include the voices of smaller, more locally-based organisations
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- A gap was identified at regional level - although increasingly strategic and policy decisions are being made regionally, there is not necessarily a cohesive regional voice for volunteering across all sectors and areas of work
- Regional bodies established in each Government Office region – to complement the work of the national council but add a distinct regional dimension

It was agreed that a broad membership was important to enable the regional bodies to be as representative as possible.

ACTION:

- **Members to encourage contacts from amongst their networks to get involved**
- **Louise Norgate to send round a list of current invitees and vacancies; members to advise Louise of any gaps or potential names to add to the list**

As part of providing secretariat support, Volunteering England has some budget available for council activities and will look to allocate this on a case-by-case basis according to the work which the council agrees to take forward.

The council discussed the issue of finding a Chair to lead the North West EVDC and act as its public face. It was felt that a Chair should have advocacy skills and a detailed understanding of volunteering as well as the capacity to maintain impartiality. Council members suggested several possible types of person or individuals who might be suitable:

- Lord Lieutenant
- Retired Local Authority Chief Executive
- University council member
- Managing Director
- Felicity Goody, Martin Hamilton, John Willis, Martin Bell or similar

The Chair would be expected to attend six meetings a year (two in the North West and four representing the North West on the national EVDC), act as an ambassador for the council and work with Baroness Hanham as national Chair.

Council members agreed that:

- An independent chair should be appointed
- The position should be advertised, although members would combine this approach with identifying possible candidates and contacting them to draw their attention to the vacancy and encourage applications
- A subgroup consisting of Emile Pinel, Sally Rimmer and Sharon Brearley should work with the secretariat on recruiting a Chair and provide support to them once in post

With advertisements appearing after Easter (once the first round of regional EVDC's is completed), a Chair should be recruited prior to the next meeting in six months' time.

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ACTION:

- **Secretariat to draft a Chair's person specification and circulate to members for comment**
- **Secretariat and Chair's subgroup to work together to timetable a recruitment process**

3 Building on Success: strategy for volunteering infrastructure

Chris Penberthy outlined the background to the creation of the Building on Success strategy:

- Written after a large-scale consultation that was also used by government to complement the initial ChangeUp consultations
- Designed as a non-funded strategy by which volunteering infrastructure (defined as organisations providing support to others who involve volunteers) would seek to improve the service it offers
- Set out six core functions that volunteering infrastructure should deliver
- Set targets for years 1, 2, 5 and 10 based around ten key themes

Based on feedback from the regional EVDCs, a consultation document will be drafted and the consultation results will form the basis of targets for years 3-5.

The council discussed the ten key themes and agreed that:

- Theme 1 having been achieved (a single definition of volunteering now exists in the volunteering Compact), this could be dispensed with
- Work remains to be done in regard to volunteer management (particularly training –related) and promotion / awareness of volunteering
- The five overlapping themes relating to volunteering infrastructure (local, regional, national, general and quality standards) should be reconfigured to reflect the progress made so far
- Theme 9 on volunteering initiatives arose from a desire to ensure government consulted adequately with the sector before launching new initiatives; significant progress has since been made and this theme is largely dealt with through the government's commitments in the volunteering Compact
- There should be greater emphasis in the key themes on diversity and ways in which hard-to-reach groups can be supported to volunteer

ACTION:

- **Louise Norgate to send out web link to the downloadable volunteering Compact**
- **Secretariat to send the draft consultation document to members for comment after Easter**

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4 ChangeUp Volunteering Hub

The report circulated to members formed the basis of a briefing to CapacityBuilders, the arms-length organisation which takes over funding of the ChangeUp programme from the Home Office on April 3rd this year.

The Volunteering Hub is one of six national ChangeUp hubs of expertise and currently has a planned work programme (comprising around 60% externally commissioned work) running until March 2007. Any bid for subsequent funding is dependent on decisions from CapacityBuilders when the organisation formally comes into being. A consultation in parallel with that for Building on Success will be used as the basis for any Hub business plan from March 2007 onwards.

The EVDC acts as the advisory body for the Volunteering Hub and council members were therefore asked to highlight potential areas or pieces of work they would like to see explored by the Hub in a new business plan. Suggestions included:

- Research
 - Into the economic value of volunteering in each region
 - On local authorities - the support they provide for volunteering infrastructure and how it fits into their remit
- Infrastructure development
 - Clarify and facilitate development of all types of regional infrastructure
- Funding
 - Lobby government for sustainable infrastructure funding
- Accessibility
 - Promote and encourage supported volunteering
 - Make Volunteer Centres more accessible
- Practical support
 - Toolkits, templates and resources for infrastructure and volunteer-involving organisations
- Promotion
 - Create diverse case studies and positive images / stories of volunteers to overcome stereotypes
 - Mainstream volunteering within the schools curriculum (citizenship)

5 Commission on the future of volunteering

The establishment of a Commission emerged out of discussions at the national EVDC, looking at ways in which to promote big and futuristic thinking across volunteering as a whole, over and above individual sectors and interests. Its aim would be to have similar impact to the Deakin commission, whose major recommendations are all enacted 11 years on (with the one exception of the forthcoming Charities Bill).

The Commission will launch officially on March 29th in London and will meet for the first time in June. For its first meeting the Commission will receive:

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- A global literature review and UK demographic study by Colin Rochester of Roehampton University
- A report created with input from all 10 bodies of the EVDC outlining topics and areas of importance which the Commission should consider

The council discussed members' visions for the future of volunteering and highlighted the following vision statements:

- Mainstreaming volunteering as a cultural norm - people are surprised if you don't volunteer
- Everyone can volunteer and will have their unique contribution valued
- Voluntary activity addresses a real need and has a real impact
- Diversity both in volunteers and the range of opportunities open to them
- Volunteering is introduced early in life and becomes a habit
- Volunteering is not government-led

Potential barriers and risks to achieving these include:

- Lack of resources for support, training and recognition
- Competing needs in life leading to lack of time to volunteer
- Over-regulation or bureaucracising / counterproductive legislation
- 'Me culture' – individualism / materialism
- Lack of understanding or of clarity within organisations about the aims and objectives of involving volunteers
- Lack of commitment (of organisational resources, strategies or staff) to involving or supporting volunteers

Suggested ways of combating these were:

- Ensure a strong and united voluntary sector working towards a shared vision
- Promotion of volunteering and of positive, diverse volunteering role models for everyone
- Securing sustainable resources for the support of volunteering

6 Any other business

6.1 Agenda for next meeting

The Secretariat team will bring two items to the next agenda:

- Draft Hub Business Plan for comment
- Building on Success – consultation results and draft targets for comment

Council members agreed that the following should also be potential items for discussion:

- Regional economic strategy – the role of volunteering and social inclusion within this (with briefing from NWDA)
- Policy matters and their regional implications –
 - Russell Commission
 - CRB changes

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- Train2Gain
- Inclusivity in volunteering - how to make it possible for everyone and anyone to volunteer

7 **Dates of future meetings**

Next meeting date to be advised (September or October 2006) – it was noted that the planned date of September 1st fell at the end of a bank holiday week and council members agreed that this should be rearranged.