

Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly

Newsletter June 2009



It has been a busy time for Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly Board since the Annual Assembly on the 28th April. Many of you have been keeping us up to date with developments through the weekly email news bulletins. If you have news you would like to share please get in touch using the contact details on the following page.

Read on for more information about the work being carried out by the VCSA Board. The most recent meeting of the Board took place on the 2nd June and covered a wide range of VCS Assembly issues from annual action planning and updates, to the recession and the engagement of small voluntary and community groups based in Shropshire.

Third Sector Survey Results

The National Third Sector Survey was carried out in late 2008 by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Office for the Third Sector. The survey assessed characteristics of the sector, views relating to local and national funding, advice and support arrangements, and the nature of relationships with statutory organisations.

In total 48,939 organisations completed the survey (549 from Shropshire). The return rate for Shropshire was significantly above the national average with a response rate of 60%. Key findings for Shropshire included:

- 91% of felt they had been either very successful or successful in meeting their main objectives over the last 12 months.
- 55% felt they had sufficient resources over the last 12 months to meet their main objectives.
- 36% stated they currently received funding from the Council.
- 20% were dissatisfied with the range of grants available through local funding (19% were satisfied).

The survey is used to measure National Indicator 7 (an Environment for a Thriving Third Sector). Shropshire has performed above the regional and national averages for the % of Third Sector Organisations who believe local statutory bodies have a 'positive' or 'very positive' influence on their success.

For more detailed analysis visit the VCS Assembly website (details overleaf).

Responding to the recession

Thank you to everyone who took part in the VCS recession workshop on the 2nd June, and to all who previously provided evidence by completing a VCS recession survey.

The workshop was facilitated by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) in order to help the VCS Assembly develop a Shropshire Local Resilience Action Plan.

Local Resilience Action Plans are recommended to support the Third Sector in avoiding the worst aspects of the economic downturn. The planning process supports the agreement of actions designed to boost resilience and strengthen local partnership working with key agencies and partnership bodies such as the Local Strategic Partnership (Shropshire Partnership).

The draft Local Resilience Action Plan sets out current activity and future actions, and is available on the Assembly Website. The VCS Assembly Board will continue to monitor the impact of the recession in Shropshire and to work in partnership with others to represent its members and the wider sector.

Updated Terms of Reference

The VCS Assembly Terms of Reference were updated and agreed at a special open meeting before the Board on the 2nd June. Only a few minor changes were necessary. This annual review of the Terms of Reference provided an opportunity to assess appropriateness of key procedures and processes. For an updated copy visit the website or telephone 01743 252295.

**Shropshire VCS
Assembly Board**

Next meeting:
8 September 2009



The Annual Assembly 2009

Shropshire VCS Annual Assembly was held on the 28th April at Shrewsbury Pro Star Football Stadium. At the VCS Board meeting on 2 June Board members considered all the information obtained at the event including evaluation forms and feedback from discussion group sessions (detailed reports are available on the website).

Overall, feedback on the event was very positive and many people commented on specific parts of the day they had found helpful or informative. The opportunity to network with other VCS Assembly members was also welcomed.

Feedback from the discussion groups highlighted five common priorities:

- Mapping and gathering of information.
- Information sharing and communication.
- Funding and resources.
- Providing assistance to infrastructure support organisations and those leading on volunteering and VCS training opportunities.
- Recognising the impact of national policy and key local issues and working in partnership to manage those impacts at a local level.

The feedback received at the annual event has been fed into the VCSA Action Plan and will be used to inform the development of the Annual Assembly 2010.

Annual Action Plan

The VCSA Board has agreed its annual action plan using feedback from the Annual Assembly. Key work areas include:

- Membership and engagement
- Communication and information sharing
- Representation and partnership working
- Forums of Interest
- Compact support
- VCSA Projects

The action plan will assist the Board in ensuring that members' key priorities are met and in monitoring and reporting progress. A copy of the action plan can be downloaded from the website.

Engaging Small Groups

One of the key issues currently being considered by the VCSA Board is how to best support and engage Shropshire's smaller voluntary and community groups. On 2nd June the Board discussed:

- How small groups currently members of the Assembly can be better supported/involved.
- How small VCS groups not currently linked to the Assembly can be made aware of the Assembly's work, the benefits of membership and provided with the opportunities to become a member.

The Board acknowledged that small groups may face additional challenges making engagement more difficult such as:

- Access to communication channels
- Lack of staff capacity/administrative support
- Rural obstacles i.e. travel
- More specific service provision by issue or geographical location

The Board suggested a number of methods of overcoming engagement challenges with reaching out through Forums of Interest a key priority. The Board will monitor the issue in order to meet the needs of the wider sector.

Compact Consultation Now On!

The consultation period to consider the new draft Compact between Shropshire Council and local voluntary and community groups was launched on the 23 June.

The draft Compact sets out shared aims and values and includes individual and joint responsibilities concerning four codes of practice: volunteering, funding, consultation and equality and diversity.

The consultation period will close on the 18 September with the launch of the Compact taking place during National Compact Week in November.

To take part in the consultation download a copy of the Compact and a feedback questionnaire by following the link on: <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/communityworking.nsf>

Contact us

For more information about Shropshire VCS Assembly visit our web site at:

<http://www.shrop.net/VoluntaryCommunitySectorAssembly/>

or contact the Shropshire Partnership Team

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