

Voluntary and Community Sector
Infrastructure Investment Plan

Delivery Plan 4
2006-2007
Continuation Plan

CAPACITY BUILDING THE CONSORTIUM

Strategic Goal

To enable the Consortium to undertake further planning in relation to the implementation, management and evaluation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the Delivery Plans for modernising VCS Infrastructure across Bedfordshire & Luton.

Current Situation

The Consortium was formed in February 2004 and undertook intensive work up to June 2004 to prepare the Infrastructure Investment Plan. Since then members of the Consortium has worked to develop two Delivery Plans, consisting of eleven separate projects, in addition to managing and servicing of the Consortium.

The consortium has taken the view that its members need to work together, not just for the two years of *ChangeUp* funding but for the longer term. These arrangements need to be sustainable and part of our collective partnership working. All members contribute time and energy to the work of the Consortium, be it preparing papers, planning and implementing the delivery plan, preparing and contributing to meetings etc. We have seen it as important to employ staff resources in delivering the work set out in the Delivery Plan, rather than co-ordinating the Consortium.

Key Activities

The Consortium will undertake further planning in relation to the implementation, management and evaluation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the Delivery Plans for modernising VCS Infrastructure across Bedfordshire & Luton. This will include:

- providing secretariat services to the Consortium;
- continuing the diverse membership of the Consortium and stakeholder consultation and engagement;
- monitoring, reviewing and updating the Infrastructure Investment Plan and overseeing the management and delivery of its constituent Delivery Plans;
- acting as fund holder by managing the receipt of funds, monitoring the payment of expenses and meeting the funder's reporting requirements;
- developing, co-ordinating and scrutinising project proposals for taking forward the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

Management and Delivery

Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire will continue to convene and chair Consortium meetings and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity will continue to produce notes of meetings. The Consortium will meet every two to three months or as and when required to undertake the key activities. Implementation Groups for each project are set up when the investment is confirmed and lead by a member of the Consortium.

Costs and Sustainability

	Revenue	Capital
Travel to Consortium Meetings	340	0
Secretariat Services	360	0
Travel and Attendance at Regional Advisory Group Meetings	776	0
Administering and Reporting on Main Spend Programme Funding	6000	0
Administration and Meeting Costs	302	0
TOTAL	£7778	£0

SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING

Strategic Goal

To increase access to, and the take-up of, a known and diverse range of sustainable volunteering opportunities across Bedfordshire & Luton.

Current Situation

As part of its first Delivery Plan the Consortium undertook a re-branding exercise to re-position local Volunteer Development Agencies as more visible access points where the needs and interests of volunteers can be met. This will enable the Consortium to be an integral part of the *ChangeUp* vision for volunteering infrastructure in England, which will be:

- modern, dynamic, strategic, coordinated and sustainable;
- publicly recognised with a physically identifiable local presence.

The Government aims to increase levels of volunteering in all communities. Volunteering infrastructure uniquely has to engage the general public in marketing volunteering opportunities and in making known the needs of local communities, as well as enabling individuals to use their skills, knowledge and interests. *ChangeUp* recognises there is a growing need for a stronger delivery network to take advantage of government volunteering campaigns. More needs to be done to promote volunteering, including increased awareness of how volunteering benefits individuals who give their time, contributes more widely to social capital, can help strengthen local communities and make a contribution to better public services.

Volunteering England has developed a national strategy, called *Building on Success*, and a new dynamic single national *Volunteer Centre* brand to promote volunteering in a clear identifiable way. This re-branding will ensure volunteering services have a recognisable identity wherever they are offered; the Bedfordshire & Luton VCS infrastructure organisations need to take advantage of these developments to raise the profile and visibility of local volunteering services.

There are currently three Volunteer Centres operating within Bedford, Luton and South Bedfordshire; all of which have the Volunteer Centre Quality Mark. The three Volunteer Centres work closely together as volunteering infrastructure and with other infrastructure bodies through integrated delivery of services. This enables good links to be made between the Volunteer Centres functions and those of generalist infrastructure. Each of the Volunteer Centres has developed its own specialisms; for example, Luton has developed *The Toolkit* and employee volunteering; Bedford has developed youth volunteering and South Bedfordshire has developed a health-check list, accredited training for volunteers and workshops based on Investing in Volunteers.

The Volunteer Centres wish to build on their joint partnership working to continue developing a consistent pattern of service across the sub-region and to tackle volunteering in hard to reach communities, in line with the Consortium's strategy for developing sustainable volunteering in Bedfordshire and Luton:

Strategic Objective: To increase access to, and the take-up of, a known and diverse range of sustainable volunteering opportunities across Bedfordshire & Luton.

Strategic Goals:

1. *To work with local volunteer-involving organisations to increase the number, range and quality of local volunteering opportunities.*
2. *To support local volunteer-involving organisations in their recruitment, retention and management of volunteers.*

3. *To market and increase awareness of the range and diversity of local volunteering opportunities and the benefits to be gained through volunteering and active community involvement.*
4. *To increase the numbers of potential volunteers seeking, choosing and taking up volunteering opportunities through local Volunteer Development Agencies.*
5. *To increase access to volunteering for groups and/or individuals that are under-represented in volunteering, are socially excluded, have extra support needs or unusual skills.*
6. *To use innovative, tried and tested outreach methods to engage with potential volunteers and bring about increased volunteering.*
7. *To facilitate the development of sustainable volunteering experiences that meet the needs of both the volunteers and local organisations and their clients.*
8. *To facilitate the development of good practice and quality standards within volunteer-involving organisations.*
9. *To develop employee volunteering initiatives with local employers.*

The work set out in this delivery plan will continue to provide a step change to the way in which volunteering infrastructure is able to provide lasting change to volunteering infrastructure and frontline organisations. It will, in particular, demonstrate that we are:

- modern, dynamic, strategic, coordinated and sustainable;
- publicly recognised with a physically identifiable local presence;
- trusted and respected for our person-focused approach to volunteers and for our expertise, flexibility, campaigning, quality of service, effectiveness and efficiency;
- seen as indispensable by the general public and the public, voluntary and community sectors;
- responsive to the needs of volunteer-involving organisations;
- able to provide a clear understanding of the range and remit of local voluntary activity and hold information on a wide range of volunteering opportunities.

Key Activities

1. ***To work with newly identified volunteer-involving organisations to increase the number, range and quality of local volunteering opportunities.***

Potential volunteers need to be provided with the best possible range of volunteering opportunities available to meet their individual needs and circumstances. We will work with new organisations identified through the Improving Reach strand of our current work (Delivery Plan 1). This work is focussing on identifying hard to reach voluntary organisations and community groups through desk research, field work and networking; it has already identified in excess of 1,500 previously unknown organisations and groups.

The Continuation Fund will provide the resources to consolidate on the Improving Reach work by building the relationship with the newly identified organisations and groups to ensure that they have fully identified the extent of their volunteering needs. As a result of this work we will be able to identify new and innovative volunteering opportunities; with clearly defined roles, skill and knowledge requirements; from a wider range of volunteer-involving organisations so that potential volunteers can find volunteer placements that meet their individual needs and circumstances.

Information about the organisations and each of the opportunities they have on offer will be included in a database, uploaded the national volunteering website (do.it.org.uk) and included in a local *Directory of Volunteering Opportunities*.

2. To engage with potential volunteers from hard to reach communities and bring about increased volunteering.

Building on tried and tested methods of volunteer engagement we will develop new and innovative methods of interacting with potential/new volunteers. Local community involvement events will be used to get more people engaged in volunteering, including those who do not traditionally get involved or who are difficult to reach. Displays in community centres, supermarkets and libraries; street events and fetes will promote volunteering and motivate people to take up local opportunities.

This will be supported through display material and a small range of marketing materials already under development as part of our current work (Delivery Plan 1). This is designed to encourage local people to access volunteering through the Volunteer Centres and to promote the range of opportunities that exist and appeal to different target groups.

We will focus this work on areas where it has been hard to reach prospective volunteers, for example in rural areas, in deprived neighbourhoods, amongst BME communities, those at risk of social exclusion and those in new and growing communities.

Within **rural areas** it has been difficult for people to access volunteering because of poor transport, too little information on the opportunities available and a lack of engagement. The Volunteer Centres in Bedford and South Bedfordshire will work to determine how best to reach and engage with rural communities and develop volunteering in rural based organisations.

Research has shown that where there are high levels of deprivation there are also low levels of volunteering. All the Volunteer Centres will work to tackle the low levels of volunteering that exist within **deprived neighbourhoods** and amongst **those at risk of social exclusion**.

The Volunteer Centres recognise that substantial volunteering and self help takes place within BME communities already. There is, however, a need to provide access to appropriate volunteering opportunities, within the wider voluntary, community and public sectors, for those from **BME communities, asylum seekers** and those whose first language is not English. The Volunteer Centres in Bedford and Luton will work to determine how best to reach and engage with these communities and develop volunteering amongst hard to reach groups; using networks, contacts and the experience of working with local BME communities on organisational development issues.

Within South Bedfordshire, approaches to estate agents and **new housing development** sales centres will promote volunteering to new residents looking to integrate themselves into new and growing communities. This aspect of our work will be a valuable testing ground for identifying the interventions that are needed to engage new residents in volunteering and will contribute to the sustainable communities growth agenda within Bedfordshire. The lessons of this work will be used to develop similar activity in Luton and Bedford at a later date.

In Bedford the Volunteer Centre will develop **employee volunteering** and team challenges, using the experience of Voluntary Action Luton. [South Bedfordshire will develop this in the longer term as part of a wider initiative to engage with employers].

Management and Delivery

Volunteer Centre Bedford will be responsible for implementing this Delivery Plan and for:

- setting and monitoring the implementation timetable;
- facilitating joint working and co-ordination with Consortium members through joint design & development meetings;

Each agency will be responsible for:

- deploying and line managing staff, and providing regular one-to-one supervision;
- ensuring representation at Bedfordshire & Luton Volunteer Centre meetings;
- undertaking the activities (described above) within their locality;

South Bedfordshire Volunteer Centre will continue to employ one full-time equivalent member of staff on the activities described above as it has previously (prior to *ChangeUp*) been the least resourced of the three Volunteer Centres. The Bedford Volunteer Centre will continue to employ one half-time equivalent member of staff on the activities described as it will be extending its current area of benefit to include the whole of North and Mid Bedfordshire as a result of the re-configuration of infrastructure agencies. The Luton Volunteer Centre will continue to employ one half-time equivalent member of staff on the activities described above.

Across the three organisations, use will also be made of existing development workers who will provide contacts with hard to reach and BME groups, and undertake some of the work with volunteer-involving organisations to develop good practice. This is added value and has not been included in the costs.

A Sustainable Volunteering Implementation Group of Volunteer Centre managers from the Consortium will meet regularly to share practice, issues and solutions, and to co-ordinate marketing and promotion opportunities across Bedfordshire & Luton, ensure delivery of the activities set out in the delivery plan and oversee the long term implementation of the strategy.

Outputs from the project will be:

1. 300 newly identified volunteer-involving organisations supported.
2. 240 new volunteers from hard to reach groups access volunteering through the Volunteer Centres.

Outcomes from the project will be:

1. An increase in the number, range and quality of local volunteering opportunities.
2. An increase in the numbers of potential volunteers seeking, choosing and taking up volunteering opportunities through local Volunteer Centres.
3. Engagement with, and increased volunteering by, those from hard to reach communities, young people and groups underrepresented in volunteering.

The work is designed to follow on from the current **timetable** (to June 2006) and will be delivered between July 2006 and March 2007.

Costs and Sustainability

Sustainable Volunteering	Revenue	Capital
Salaries (SCP 28), NI, Pension, Payroll Charges etc	35481	0
Staff Training and Development	0	0
Telephone, Postage, Stationery and Photocopying	0	0
Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	0	0
TOTAL	£35481	£0

The above costs represent the salary costs needed to deliver the activities set out in the Delivery Plan; these will be supplemented by other funding already secured to deliver other activities and associated running costs.

Consortium members will seek to identify and apply to additional sources of funding to ensure that the whole strategy can be implemented over a sustained period. The Russell Commission on youth volunteering is likely to lead to new funding streams becoming available; these and others will be used to develop new initiatives on youth volunteering, sports volunteering etc.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING THROUGH FUNDING ADVICE

Strategic Goal

To develop and strengthen the local VCS infrastructure by providing funding advice services accessible to all groups in Bedfordshire and Luton. These services will be strategically situated to ensure that the infrastructure organisations can effectively support groups through an office based service and/or as outreach, dependent on need.

Current Situation

As part of its second Delivery Plan the Consortium has strengthened the provision of funding advice services at strategically accessible points around the county and in Luton to support groups with an office and outreach service to reflect the varying needs of the VCS. Additional capacity has been established within Bedford, Luton and Leighton Buzzard to ensure that a quality service can be provided. This has created a more even distribution of support to the whole area by raising the number of funding adviser posts from 1.4 to 3 full-time equivalent posts.

Bedfordshire Funding Advice Bureau currently has one full-time Funding Adviser. The organisation is currently merging with North and Mid Bedfordshire CVSs as part of the re-configuration of infrastructure support in Bedfordshire.

Voluntary Action Luton has a Funding Adviser post on its staff establishment and this continues to be under threat following withdrawal of various funding streams and the loss of Neighbourhood Renewal status (from April 2006). Efforts to secure the funding needed to continue the service are a high priority, with current provision being provided through development staff and a fund manager (one FTE post). It is crucial that this service does not lapse as it is meeting a well documented need for VCS organisations in the town.

Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire currently has one full-time Funding Adviser post and has secured funding from the Big Lottery Fund to sustain the post beyond this current *ChangeUp* funding period.

Demand indicates a need for a far greater level of service than has been available as all agencies working with grassroots organisations quickly discover the significant and ongoing need for both funding and funding advice services. Recently held funding conferences, attended by well over 200 delegates eager to understand and learn more about how to raise funds, also demonstrated the need for funding advice and support as a major need of small and medium sized groups. Demand within training programmes equally demonstrates the need for this provision and the nature of the work of infrastructure organisations makes them the natural focal point for these expectations and a key development and support service to the VCS.

Financing VCS activity is a key element of the *ChangeUp* programme. It recognises that front-line organisations need to be able to take advantage of opportunities to diversify their funding sources and demonstrate increased skill and better standards in more effective fundraising. Fundraising skills were cited as amongst the highest priority skills for the sector.

Two Consortium members, Voluntary Action Luton, through its CFI, and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) have developed the capacity to administer and support direct access to local grant schemes. The current climate has seen the withdrawal of a number of funding sources used to support these schemes. In this situation it becomes ever more difficult to sustain, leaving groups with fewer local options and therefore a greater need for wider fundraising skills. As part of a wider network, the funding support officers currently meet on a quarterly basis with local government officers whose roles focus on Lottery support to share knowledge. Work is underway to enable this network to become a more strategically focussed group to act as a hub for

the strategic delivery of funding advice services across Bedfordshire and Luton and to develop the network's role and links with trusts and funders.

Key Activities

1. ***To develop the Bedfordshire & Luton Funding Network as a more strategically focussed group to act as a hub for the strategic delivery of funding advice services across the sub-region.***

The Funding Network's information sharing role will continue to be developed to include the development of the more effective links with trusts and funders. The network will be the key partnership to oversee the strategic planning of future Funding Advice service needs.

2. ***Enhance the provision of funding advice services to voluntary organisations and community groups across Bedfordshire & Luton.***

Funding Advisers will work with a minimum of 40 local voluntary organisations and community groups to develop their fundraising skills and knowledge. Groups will be encouraged to think about sustainable funding practices. VCS organisations will be directed to the most appropriate advice service and the website portal will enable these links to be developed. The Funding Advisers will contribute to the development of three funding workshops as part of the training programme within CVS and made fully accessible to the VCS.

Management and Delivery

To ensure continuation of the work commenced in the earlier Delivery Plan, two 0.75 FTE Funding Adviser posts will be provided at North & Mid Bedfordshire CVS and at Voluntary Action Luton. Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire will provide its funding advice service through other funding.

The newly merged North & Mid Bedfordshire CVS will be responsible for implementing this Delivery Plan and for:

- setting and monitoring the implementation timetable;
- ensuring consultation with Consortium members through joint meetings;
- servicing the Bedfordshire & Luton Funding Network.

Each agency will be responsible for:

- deploying and line managing staff, and providing regular one-to-one supervision;
- ensuring representation at the Bedfordshire & Luton Funding Network meetings;
- delivery of the funding advice services.

Consortium members involved in this work will share practice, issues and solutions, and co-ordinate work across Bedfordshire & Luton, through their involvement in the Bedfordshire & Luton Funding Advice Network.

Outputs from the project will be:

1. Provision of funding advice and support to 40 groups.
2. Provision of three workshops on funding.

Outcomes from the project will be:

1. A more strategically focussed Bedfordshire & Luton Funding Network acting as a hub for the strategic delivery of funding advice services across the sub-region.
2. Enhanced provision of funding advice services to local voluntary organisations and community groups across Bedfordshire & Luton.

The work is designed to follow on from the current **timetable** (to June 2006) and will be delivered between July 2006 and March 2007.

Costs and Sustainability

	Revenue	Capital
Salaries (SCP 28), NI, Pension, Payroll Charges etc	28014	0
Staff Training and Development	0	0
Telephone, Postage, Stationery and Photocopying	0	0
Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	0	0
TOTAL	£28014	£0

The above costs represent the salary costs needed to deliver the activities set out in the Delivery Plan; these will be supplemented by other funding already secured to deliver other activities and associated running costs.

The Consortium will work towards the future sustainability of a strategic Funding Advice Service through Investing in Communities proposals linked to community and economic development.

BME VCS INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Strategic Goal

To develop and strengthen the infrastructure needs of existing BME infrastructure bodies and community groups and any new BME groups that are identified via other consortium projects.

To build on the Strategy for BME VCS Infrastructure Support (currently being researched and developed) by developing structures and working arrangements for the longer term implementation of BME services across Bedfordshire, including rural areas and other isolated groups, which will increase and inform understanding of the needs of BME groups and other groups working with BME issues within the community.

Current Situation

A full-time seconded officer from Bedford REC is carrying out the current infrastructure research, supported by a part-time administrator. Once the research is complete, there is a need to present the evolved strategy to a sample of organisations and stakeholders to determine mechanisms for delivery and accessibility of support services. In order to be able to roll out the strategy effectively continuation funding is required post June 2006 in order to prepare the way for delivery of services to BME groups.

Key Activities:

1. Hold a consultation event with stakeholders to roll out the strategy based on recommendations and findings gathered during the current research phase.
2. Implement the strategy in partnership with stakeholders and members of the Consortium.

Management and Delivery

To ensure the continuity of the work started under Delivery Plan 2, Bedford REC will continue to second a full-time Officer to carry out the key activities. The Officer will be managed and supervised by the Chief Officer of Bedford REC.

The existing Implementation Group with representatives from: MENTER, Bedford REC Executive Committee and a member of Consortium will oversee the project.

All Consortium members involved in this work will share practices, issues and solutions and co-ordinate work across Bedfordshire

Outputs for the project will be:

1. Roll out the draft strategy for the delivery of BME VCS infrastructure support services to a maximum of 40 BME groups/stakeholders at an event in partnership with MENTER.
2. Implementation of the strategy for the delivery of prioritised BME services in partnership with stakeholders and Consortium members.

Outcomes for the project will be:

1. An adopted published strategy specifically defined by stakeholders and BME groups, developed to support the infrastructure of BME groups.
2. Mechanisms for implementation of the strategy will be identified and implemented in partnership with stakeholders and partners as well as statutory and public bodies that will deliver services to BME organisations.

3. A cohesive approach to provision, improved services and access to services by BME groups increasing sustainability of up to ten groups.
4. Improved awareness by the voluntary, community and public sector organisations of the needs of BME groups and those who are able to appropriately address BME issues at decision making levels and influence change.

Costs and Sustainability

	Revenue	Capital
Salaries (SCP 28), NI, Pension, Payroll Charges etc	18677	0
Staff Training and Development	0	0
Telephone, Postage, Stationery and Photocopying	0	0
Management, Monitoring and Evaluation	0	0
TOTAL	£18677	£0

The above costs represent the salary costs needed to deliver the activities set out in the Delivery Plan; these will be supplemented by other funding (to be) secured for the associated running costs.