

Voluntary and Community Sector
Infrastructure Investment Plan

Delivery Plan 5
2006-2008

BEDFORDSHIRE & LUTON VCS INFRASTRUCTURE CONSORTIUM

Infrastructure Investment Plan

In January 2006 the Consortium undertook a review of its Infrastructure Investment Plan and overall progress in achieving its objectives. The Consortium adopted an outcomes approach to its work, created a vision and revised its purpose:

Our Vision

A vibrant, effective, sustainable and inclusive voluntary and community sector where all individuals and communities are empowered to play a full part in local voluntary and community action and take a leading role in meeting the social infrastructure needs of new and growing communities.

Our Purpose

A VCS Infrastructure Consortium able to develop effective joint working that enables Local Infrastructure Organisations to support the diverse needs of the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Our Strategic Outcomes

- VCS Infrastructure Organisations work strategically and in collaboration with one another and the public sector on policy, information and services.
- Rural, urban and hard to reach voluntary organisations and community groups are aware of and understand the roles and services offered by the Consortium and its constituent members and are better connected with our services.
- Local communities, voluntary organisations and community groups have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to fulfil their potential for responding to the needs of, and providing services to, their communities.
- The people of Bedfordshire engage in active citizenship and are able to access a diverse range of volunteering opportunities that meet both the needs of volunteers and local volunteer-involving organisations.
- Voluntary organisations and community groups have a strong voice and an active involvement in influencing the decisions that shape the community in which they operate.
- The voluntary and community sector takes a leading role in enabling people to create, run and sustain the voluntary and community groups, volunteering opportunities and social networks required for new and growing communities.

These were endorsed by stakeholders at a Bedfordshire & Luton *State of the Sector ChangeUp* event held on the 18 July 2006.

As part of the recent Improving Reach Project the Consortium undertook a comprehensive mapping exercise and needs assessment of the sector. There are over 3,800 voluntary organisations and community groups working within Bedfordshire and Luton, including 2,100 newly identified organisations/groups that have not benefitted from VCS infrastructure services before. Many of these organisations identified specific needs through the mapping research that was undertaken, thus enabling local infrastructure organisations to target their services to meet the needs of these organisations.

Developing Good Governance

Needs Assessment

The mapping of local voluntary organisations and community groups has highlighted the need to increase the capacity of local groups to deliver their services and activities. 28% of groups report that they require additional volunteers and trustees, need help in developing, managing, supporting and training their workforce (staff, volunteers and trustees) and in developing staff and volunteer policies. 9% of groups also need to develop and improve their governance practice and 11% report they would like to develop their business planning and performance management skills.

Anecdotal evidence and research by the national hubs suggests that the actual percentage of groups needing to address these issues is much higher. It also shows that:

- organisations struggle to find people to take on governance roles and often do not use the full range of search and selection methods
- governance is not widely promoted as a valuable role
- induction and training of those who work in or with governance roles is often poor and sometimes non-existent
- insufficient effort is put into developing people's governance skills and understanding of roles
- most trustees do not review their own performance or that of their organisation.

These key skills (along with their ability to secure funding (18%)) and issues are needed to create sustainable voluntary and community organisations and provide good governance. Currently, support to local VCS frontline organisations – including those within BME communities and rural areas – has insufficient capacity to meet demand or to focus on specific activities that would 'make a difference' locally.

Project Purpose

The project will enable voluntary organisations and community groups to increase their own capacity and be more effective in the governance of their organisation. The project will therefore seek to:

- (1) develop ways of attracting more volunteers to act as, and to increase the supply of, trustees and management committee members from within voluntary and community organisations and from outside the sector (e.g. professional bodies, public sector organisations, businesses);
- (2) work with voluntary and community organisations to develop their understanding and ability to implement effective governance arrangements, including trustee induction and development; and the role, functions and performance of trustee boards;
- (3) work with voluntary and community organisations to increase their capacity to meet their purpose and deliver their missions.

Project Activities

Consortium members will deliver a range of activities that will contribute to the outcomes and outputs of the project (see below). These activities will include:

- the training and development of staff within local infrastructure organisations on the development of good practice in governance;
- activities to promote governance as a worthwhile and important activity;
- design, development and delivery of training workshops and networking opportunities for people to learn and share experience;
- support to Chairs and trustees in their leadership of organisations;
- provision of consultancy, one-to-one meetings and small group support;

- providing up to date and accessible advice and information of a range of governance issues, such as trustee liability, SORP etc.;
- signposting organisations to accessible material on good governance (available in print and in electronic formats);
- the development, publication and dissemination of training materials, information sheets and other material, in electronic as well as printed formats, that fill gaps in advice available to people undertaking, or working with, trustee roles;
- promotion and use of the National Occupational Standards for board members; the Code of Governance for the Voluntary Sector, governance checklists and other performance assessment tools;
- enabling organisations to use the full range of trustee search and selection methods;
- approaches to professional bodies, public sector organisations and businesses to recruit volunteers willing to act as trustees or to provide other skills;
- work to increase businesses' understanding of the value of employee volunteering to their own business and workforce, particularly in terms of staff development, as well as to voluntary and community groups;
- community engagement, marketing campaigns and raising awareness of the range and diversity of local trustee volunteering opportunities and the benefits to be gained through volunteering.

Bedford Race Equality Council will deliver these activities to BME VCS organisations identified in the earlier research project that identified the needs of the BME VCS sector. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity will deliver these activities with Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees, Playing Field Associations etc in rural localities across Bedfordshire. CVS Mid & North Bedfordshire, Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire and Voluntary Action Luton will deliver these activities to voluntary organisations and community groups within their respective localities. The three Volunteer Centres will deliver trustee recruitment activities across Bedfordshire & Luton.

Outcomes

1. Voluntary organisations and community groups are able to recruit trustees and other volunteers to fill identified skills gaps.
2. Voluntary organisations, community groups and BME and rural communities have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to increase their governance capacity and implement effective governance arrangements.

Outputs

12 trusteeship promotional activities/campaigns aimed at local businesses, professional bodies and/or public sector organisations
 12 trusteeship promotional activities/campaigns aimed at all sections of the community
 10 training courses and/or networking opportunities for people to learn and share experience
 50 groups receive intensive support through consultancy, one-to-one meetings and/or small groups
 50 articles, information sheets, training materials and other material produced
 16 new pages on trusteeship/governance issues added to the *voluntaryworks* and *onevoice* websites

Partnership Working

Needs Assessment

Work undertaken by the local authorities, other statutory agencies and partnerships is more engaging with the voluntary and community sector and there is a general consensus that all agencies can improve their collaborative and partnership working. The Consortium's recent stakeholder event (July 2006) highlighted the need for improved partnership working.

The funding landscape is changing and voluntary and community sector organisations need support to respond. More funding is available only through a tender/procurement process, often across larger areas of benefit, where working in partnership is a means to achieve this. Organisations need to understand and embrace collaborative working approaches in order to be in a position to take up these opportunities.

Purpose

The project will enable voluntary organisations and community groups to develop and engage in partnership working. The project will therefore seek to:

- (1) promote the concept of working collaboratively, enabling the sector to make informed decisions about whether and how to work collaboratively;
- (2) support the work of the Luton Community Empowerment Network (CEN) in continuing its representational role of the wider VCS (known as Luton Assembly) at the Luton Forum (the LSP) and enabling its participation in strategic decision-making and involvement in the wider delivery of programmes;
- (3) enable the CEN in its representational role to support the work of the newly forming Luton Equalities Agency (LuEA) with a brief to use a multi agency approach to embed community cohesion into all elements of the Community Plan and respond to unlawful discriminatory practice.

Project Activities

Consortium members in Luton and Mid & North Bedfordshire will deliver a range of activities that will contribute to the outcomes and outputs of the project (see below). These activities will include:

- actively networking local organisations to enable them to identify and progress to potential partnerships;
- activities to develop a local culture of collaboration;
- one to one advice and guidance to organisations that wish to collaborate;
- joint working with the NCVO Collaborative Working Unit;
- support to VCS representatives attending local fora;
- promotion of good practice on community cohesion to business, public and voluntary sector agencies.

Outcomes

1. Voluntary organisations and community groups have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to develop their collaborative and partnership working arrangements.
2. Communities (in Luton) are enabled to have a voice in strategic decision-making and in ensuring that their representatives are accountable through meetings of the Luton Assembly.
3. The cross-sector development of an agency with the remit to look at the reality of community cohesion and to develop and agree multi-agency roll-out of policies to address this in Luton.

Outputs

- 3 networking events/activities to enable organisations to identify and progress to potential partnerships;
- 6 groups receive intensive support through consultancy, one-to-one meetings and/or small groups
- 4 Luton Assembly meetings
- 6 Luton Forum meetings
- 10 LPSB meetings attended by three VCS representatives (from Luton Assembly and Voluntary Action Luton)
- 1 strongly delivering Luton Equalities Agency with its multi-agency sub-committee

Project Management

Delivery

This project will be delivered by all agencies within the Consortium (except Bedfordshire and Luton Council for Voluntary Youth Services which is under review and unable to make funding and delivery commitments until this review is complete). Each agency will appoint/assign staff to deliver the proposed activities. The Volunteer Centres will lead and co-ordinate trustee recruitment. Collaborative working between all agencies and colleagues will be developed in this new area of delivery. The Consortium will oversee delivery of the project and monitor progress.

Outputs will be allocated to each agency, which will be responsible for delivery and reporting progress on a quarterly basis to the Accountable Body.

Budget

Expenditure	2006/07	2007/08
Volunteering Officer salaries	10032	13374
Development/Information Officers salaries	50160	33440
BME Development Officer salaries	5573	11147
Partnerships Officers salaries	16720	11146
NI, Pension and Payroll Charges	12374	12440
Good Governance staff training and development	0	2600
Good Governance trustee training and development	9000	9000
Good Governance trustee recruitment	5250	3000
Collaborative Working CEN & LuEA	3564	1345
Collaborative working in Mid & North Bedfordshire	2000	2000
Bid preparation, monitoring & reporting to Capacity Builders	3000	3000
Project management, monitoring and reporting @ 5%	5884	5124
TOTAL	123557	107619
<i>Capacity Builders Funding Allocation</i>	<i>123557</i>	<i>107619</i>

The budget takes account of existing Capacity Builders funding commitments in 2006/07 in respect of salaries for the Volunteer Centres and the Bedford Race Equality Council BME Development Officer.