

Yorkshire & Humber Regional Forum
Updating you on our work

The Regional Forum is the strategic organisation for the voluntary and community sector in Yorkshire and the Humber. We are a member led organisation with over 165 members. We bring together voluntary and community sector organisations to ensure that there is a coherent voice at a regional level and that the sector has the right support and structures to contribute to regional activity.

State of the VCS in Yorkshire and the Humber

For the past few years, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and Government have anticipated a significant reduction in grant funding for the sector, particularly from April 2008 onwards.

This situation was predicated on various funding programmes coming to an end over 2007 and 2008 (e.g. SRB, the 2000-6 European programmes, Neighbourhood Renewal funding, Local Network Fund) and also on the continuing trend towards amalgamating funding into one large pot, administered by a public agency and used to commission public service delivery (e.g. Single Pots within Regional Development Agencies and Local Area Agreements within Local Authorities). There is also a trend from grants to contracts, which affects smaller organisations in particular, and raises issues around the independence of the sector.

There is a view, particularly popular in central Government, that this reduction in grant funding will be mitigated by an increase in contract delivery, 'mainstreaming' and a more enterprising approach to income generation by the VCS.

The anecdotal position within the sector however, is that significant numbers of organisations will be unable to sustain their activities and will have to severely curtail their work, or even close down during 2008.

The Regional Forum is conducting a short survey to get a better sense of the impact of the current environment for the VCS. We are aware of some similar surveys in our region and the intention is that this survey builds on that work and helps by providing a pan-regional picture.

We will then:

- share the findings with the sector, at local, regional and national level;
- feed into funding/sustainability campaigns;
- inform and lobby (if necessary) regional and national agencies;
- share the findings with VCS representatives on partnership boards;
- use the findings in our responses to regional and national policy.

We are aware that filling in long questionnaires is time-consuming, so have kept it short (5 minutes to fill in) and hope you'll feel able to share your experiences with us. The survey will be available on-line on our website shortly, or we can send you a Word document by e-mail or post.

Finally, if you have conducted your own survey around this issue and would be willing to share the findings with the Forum, or know of similar pieces of work carried out by other organisations, please contact Alison Haskins, Deputy Director, on 0113 394 2300, e-mail alison.haskins@regionalforum.org.uk

Open College Network Credit Accumulation Framework

The Open College Network for the Yorkshire and Humber region works extensively with the voluntary and community sector to accredit learning from Entry Level to Level Three, as regulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). National Open College Network (NOCN) is the awarding body for credit-based qualifications achieved by learners in workplaces, schools, colleges and the community.

OCN providers are involved in tests and trials for the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the Foundation Learning Tier across the country and in the region. During this year and next, NOCN will be extending its range of high quality credit based products to meet the demands of learners and employers in local, regional and national social and economic planning.

Credit Accumulation is a system that reflects the reality of many adults' lives, that rarely allow long tracts of time for learning. Learners can begin learning, accumulate credits, then return, perhaps to a different setting at a later date to complete the qualification.

Log onto
<http://www.ocnyhr.org.uk/index.hp?id=1&secid=06>
for more information and contact details.

Community Anchors

Representatives from the Communities and Local Government department (CLG) and the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) visited Community Alliance members in Doncaster on 20th February, giving them a first hand look at the extraordinary work that anchors are doing in the community. Community Anchors are independent community-led organisations.

Among the members visited were Cantley Community Association, North Doncaster Development Trust and Conisbrough & Denaby Development Trust.

The tour highlighted the positive benefits of community anchors to local people and the ways in which they respond to local need. It was also an opportunity to bring to life the concept of community anchors by showing at first hand the range of projects being run.

Bec Clarkson, Programme Director from the Community Alliance said: "The Community Alliance has developed a good relationship with Government and is keen to continue working in partnership. By showcasing the work of our members and providing the opportunity for civil servants to meet staff, volunteers and participants, we can bring to light the challenges and successes of anchor organisations."

Training for VCS teachers and trainers

Now that the voluntary sector is part of the further education, or 'lifelong learning' sector, enabling those who work as teachers and trainers in the sector to achieve professional qualifications is an important part of the development of learning within the UK.

For further education colleges this will mean that all people wishing to teach will need to hold an endorsed teaching qualification. For the voluntary sector it is not currently compulsory but is advisory, particularly for teachers and trainers for Personal and Community Development Learning, as well as other forms of voluntary sector training and learning.

Opportunities and pathways for VCS teachers and trainers are being developed by local colleges, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), and some learning consortia. To check if you are prepared, contact the LLUK free information and advice service on 020 7936 5798.

Yorkshire Forward Corporate Plan

The consultation on Yorkshire Forward's draft Corporate Plan closed on 21st February. The Plan sets out how Yorkshire Forward intends to contribute to the region's economic goals, as set out in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). It also begins to address the implications of the recent 'Sub National Review of Economic Development' (SNR), which recommends significant re-configuring of regional structures and planning.

The Regional Forum, on behalf of voluntary and community organisations in the region, has responded to the consultation. The full response can be viewed on the Forum's website at <http://www.regionalforum.org.uk>



SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- The draft plan goes into detail about how Yorkshire Forward intends to deliver higher levels of economic growth, but the Forum believes that these policies need to be linked more effectively with social and environmental priorities. If this is not done there is a risk that the benefits of economic growth will only be enjoyed by a minority of people, not including those living in disadvantaged communities.
- The plan gives details of Yorkshire Forward's new 'Policy Product Range'. We would have liked to have seen some explanation of how Yorkshire Forward intends to develop an integrated approach to the key policy areas. For example, links need to be established between the 'Urban Renaissance' policy product and those of 'Skills' and 'Enterprise'.
- We are pleased that Yorkshire Forward emphasises the need for better partnership working to help deliver the goal of economic regeneration. However, we believe that voluntary sector organisations would also like to see some recognition in the draft of the part that the sector can play as key partners in this process.
- The Regional Forum believes that the SNR, can provide the impetus for a new and inclusive way of working in the region. We believe that this should start with a discussion, led by Yorkshire Forward, on some key principles. These should include agreement on how the Social, Environmental, and Economic partners can be equal members of 'Team Yorkshire and Humber'.

If you would like to discuss the response, please contact Stephen Fox at the Regional Forum on 0113 394 2300.

Third Sector Trends Study

Northern Rock Foundation announced in December the final details of its Third Sector Trends Study – an innovative research programme on the scale, dynamics and needs of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in North East England and Cumbria. The Regional Forum has been in discussions with Northern Rock Foundation since the inception of the project to find a way of extending the survey to include Yorkshire and the Humber.

It is intended that the quantitative strand will refresh the work done in Yorkshire and the Humber in 1999-2001. The information from the qualitative element of the survey will improve the processes that govern the voluntary sector's relationships with public agencies and help to accurately predict and assess the impact of future policy implementation on individual organisations, sub-sectors of the VCS and the third sector as a whole. We will keep you updated on the project's progress.

PARTNERSHIPS & MERGERS

Mergers, partnerships, commissioning, the Sub-National Review: this year's two day Regional Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) Conference at Cober Hill tackled some of the big issues facing the sector, through discussions, some excellent presentations, a walk down to the sea (and even a trip to the pub).

The theme of mergers was explored through some fascinating case studies: the Cumbria CVS merger, and the formation of 'Coast and Moors Voluntary Action'. Overall, merger emerged as a complex option, hard to achieve and only viable in certain circumstances. Significant issues to do with costs, legislation and procedure came up (such as employment, property, insurance). Speakers from Voluntary Action Sheffield gave information about partnerships and other forms of collaboration.

Olivia Butterworth explained the approach being taken by the Department of Health (DH) to strategic funding and investment (she is seconded to work on the DH review from Keighley Voluntary Services). A key message: commissioning by public sector bodies can lead to offering grants, not just procurement.

Judy Robinson, Director of the Regional Forum, explained why the sub national review is of vital importance to the voluntary and community sector in the region. Consultation will start in the next few months. NAVCA Chief Executive Kevin Curley gave an overview of several areas of activity including the Local Area Agreements national indicator set (NI7 in particular): he urged LIOs to take part in the Communities and Local Government department survey later this year.

Some 30 managers from CVS and other infrastructure organisations across the region attended the event.

Rural News

The Rural Services Network, a coalition of local authorities and other public service providers, has published a Report on the state of communities in rural England.

The report, called 'Sustaining Rural Communities - a Call for Action' was handed to the Communities and Local Government department on 3rd March. It says that the Government is failing to deliver on its promise to protect the interests of people living in rural communities.

Key demands include;

- A commitment from the Prime Minister to assume responsibility for, and act swiftly on, the findings of the Taylor Review into affordable rural housing.
- A review of the way in which the planning system, including the Planning Inspectorate, applies the test of sustainability in rural areas.
- Recognition of the additional cost of providing services in rural areas through the distribution of public funds for the provision of services.
- A high level commitment across Government to sustaining balanced and vibrant rural communities, which are stable for everyone over the long term.

Further information can be obtained from www.rsonline.org.uk.



Manifestly speaking

Throughout recent history, many great social changes have been heralded by the production of a manifesto: The Tamworth Manifesto, the Communist Manifesto, the Humanist Manifesto, the SCUM Manifesto, the Surrealist Manifesto, and now...

For the past few months, the Regional Forum has been hosting a small working group to develop a voluntary and community sector (VCS) Manifesto for Yorkshire and the Humber. The origins of this piece of work lay in the heady period in autumn of last year, when it looked like Gordon Brown might call a snap election. We wanted to be able to lobby politicians in Yorkshire and the Humber on a range of issues that are important to the VCS, which we think will make the region an even better place to live and work.

As we now know, the election didn't take place, but our work to develop the Manifesto continues apace - alongside the political parties, which are developing their policy positions around a whole range of issues.

Currently, the VCS Manifesto has been constructed around the three themes of 'Equal' 'Sustainable' and 'Involved' and under these themes the working group has come up with the following issues:

Equal

- * The widening social and economic gap in the region
- * The need for equity in the region
- * The desirability of cohesion between people in the region

Sustainable

- * Regional development to take account of social, environmental AND economic needs
- * Infrastructure development connects people to services, leisure and housing as well as jobs
- * Ensuring people have access to excellent support into work and meaningful work opportunities

Involved

- * A wide range of people help to make decisions in the region
- * A strong civil society
- * Enliven local democracy and devolve power where possible
- * Recognise the importance of social capital

Over the next couple of months, we will be consulting on the initial themes and issues in the VCS Manifesto, and also coming up with a very specific list of 'asks/demands' to raise in the document. This is our chance as a sector to create a simple, but powerful message about the type of region we want to contribute to and what would help the VCS make the most effective contribution. The Manifesto will then be launched in early summer.

Once launched, the intention is to widely publicise the Manifesto, and to bring it to the attention of political representatives in the region, to ensure that our sector's vision for, and contribution to Yorkshire and the Humber is being kept to the fore in their thinking and activities.

If you have specific ideas for the Manifesto, please contact Alison Haskins, Deputy Director at the Forum on 0113 394 2300 or take part in the consultation which will be carried out through our e-groups and website.

Third Sector Peer Coaching for Learning and Skills

This is a new free programme running from March 2008 to March 2009 for third sector providers of learning and skills and third sector organisations about to become providers.

Is your organisation:

- o planning to go through the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) or Invitation to Tender (ITT) processes
- o currently involved in these
- o just got through the PQQ or succeeded in becoming an LSC - funded third sector provider for the first time; or
- o an existing third sector provider that would welcome support around quality issues and meeting LSC requirements?

Would you like:

- o short-term, tailored support and guidance from a peer coach who also works in the third sector and who has successfully managed the delivery of learning programmes for the LSC?

Then this could be for you!

For more information about this LSC - funded support programme and for an application form contact Rachel Hughes: Tel: 0116 204 4217 e-mail: rachel.hughes@niace.org.uk

On this day...

April		
19th	National Garlic Day	(USA)
20th	Passover	
29th	National Scampi Day	(USA)
May		
1st	Beltane	(Pagan)
20th	Wesak	(Buddhist)
28th	Amnesty International Day	
June		
5th	World Environment Day	

Events

9th April - CulturEuro Seminar, Dewsbury
Providing the latest information on European funding programmes to the arts and cultural sector for 2008.

25th April - Skills, Employability and Education 2012 Conference for Yorkshire and the Humber, Leeds

A showcase event and an excellent opportunity for you to hear about, and help shape, our region's plans for seizing the opportunities of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

1st-3rd May - Intercultural Cities Conference, Liverpool

An opportunity to look at how different cultures can live together and how mixing can be turned to economic, social and cultural advantage.

Visit our website for more information and contact details: <http://www.regionalforum.org.uk>



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