

Voluntary and Community Sector News

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Suzy's column

Like many others I am keenly watching the growth of all the plants I recently planted, the most fascinating is a box of 'dust' received for Mothers Day, which allegedly contained herbs! The 'dust' is now growing into small trees that are not remotely like any herb I recognise! My only hope is that they are legal!

I'm feeling very excited about the work that is currently being done by consultants to develop a mechanism that will give the VCS in Worcestershire a stronger, more strategic voice. There are so many opportunities for the VCS in the new political climate and having a body that can really reflect all the diverse voices in the sector and lobby public bodies will be a huge boost. You should have received a consultation document asking for your views and I'd urge you to make a contribution to this valuable piece of work, if you haven't already done so.

The Compact has also been important in raising the profile of the VCS amongst public sector bodies and has made good progress in establishing good working relationships between them. It is now time to refresh the Compact and the Compact Steering Group will be making this their focus in the coming months.

Please get in touch – I'd love to hear from you and perhaps we can feature your work in a future edition of this newsletter!

Suzy James
VCS Unit Coordinator

New emergency volunteer team for Worcestershire

The Worcestershire Crisis Support Team (WCST) was officially launched by the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Michael Brinton, along with County Council Director Eddie Clarke on Tuesday, May 3.

WCST exists as a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors, sharing a broad range of skills and providing a comprehensive, consistent and validated standard of training to develop Crisis Support Officers.

Thirty-one volunteers were recognised at the event, organised by the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit, for successfully completing their foundation training and becoming the first operational members of the team.

Their role will be to provide practical, emotional and psychological help to people affected by any large scale major incident, for example a flood, a train crash or any other type of emergency.

The partners who have contributed to the Worcestershire Crisis Support Team alongside Worcestershire County Council are ASSIST Trauma Care, British Red Cross, Co-operative Funeral Care, Cruse Bereavement Care, the Diocese of Worcester, HM Coroner, NHS Worcestershire, Rosie Murray Awareness Raising for Trauma, the Samaritans, the West Mercia Police Family Liaison Service, the University of Worcester and Worcestershire Interfaith Forum.

The team can provide immediate practical support, emotional support, telephone support and one-to-one support for the bereaved alongside Police Family Liaison Officers, managing messages of condolence, facilitating self-help groups and being flexible enough to adapt to the specific needs of people affected.

Recruitment for the 2012 training programme will begin in September.

For more information about the Worcestershire Crisis Support Team, please see www.worcestershirecrisisupport.org or contact Mike Warner, Emergency Planning Officer, on 01905 766247 or at mwarner@worcestershire.gov.uk.



Institute of Rural Health

Responding to a Changing World Focus for Rural Health Week

Examples of good work that has improved health and wellbeing in rural communities is being sought by a leading national charity.

“Achieving rural health and wellbeing - responding to a changing world” will be the theme of this year’s Rural Health Week from September 18-24.

The week aims to celebrate the successes as well as to raise awareness of the challenges involved in delivering health and social care services to dispersed rural communities. Rural Health Week is designed to raise the profile of rural health issues locally, regionally and nationally by bringing together people at all levels, from individuals and voluntary organisations to health professionals and local government workers.

The Institute of Rural Health (IRH), which organises Rural Health Week, is hoping that local, regional and national groups and organisations will get involved this year by highlighting the innovative practice that they have developed to address the particular challenges that rurality and remoteness present to rural people, their communities and the service providers.

“We live in changing times, with continuing reorganisation and reductions in funding for health and care services and a greater emphasis on people taking more responsibility for their own health,” said Jane Randall Smith, IRH Chief Executive.

“During Rural Health Week, we would like to highlight examples of good practice and innovation in relation to delivering and accessing health services, partnership working and building capacity in communities.

“We are looking for examples of people and agencies working together to cross boundaries to do things differently to improve health and social care outcomes. For example, we would like to hear about examples of telemedicine and telecare being utilised to minimise travel costs for both service providers and users or different models of service delivery such as a mobile service or new ways to reach out to the ‘hard to reach’.”

All examples of good practice and innovation will be added to the www.ruralhealthgoodpractice.org.uk online database and groups and organisations will also have their activities highlighted on the Rural Health Week website at www.irh.ac.uk/rural-health-week. Messages of support and supporters’ priority rural health issues will also be posted on the website.

To find out more or to submit details of activities for Rural Health Week contact either Jane Randall-Smith at janers@irh.ac.uk or IRH Information Officer Helen Porter at helenp@irh.ac.uk or telephone 01686 650800.

A new kid on the block

The Worcestershire Coalition for Independent Living ...

... known as WCIL, is a user led organisation launched with support from a large number of user led disability organisations and service users and carers in December 2010 and in line with guidance from the DoH.

WCIL will be sharing experiences, offering mutual support and a new and intelligent way of working that will maximise outcomes for service users by pooling of intelligence, experiences and resources, joint delivery of services (where appropriate) and becoming a streamlined mechanism ensuring that organisations such as the County Council, the local NHS and others know and meet the needs of individual service users.

Rather than being a competitor to existing user led social care organisations in Worcestershire, WCIL is meant to bring these organisations together, offer ‘strength in numbers’ and enable small organisations to deliver complex service contracts in a cost efficient and high quality way.

Support from Worcestershire County Council

Although being entirely independent of the County Council, WCIL has been and is being supported by the Customer Engagement Manager in Adult and Community Services, Martin Heuter. Martin’s role is to provide development support, help with funding/contracting and to support engagement with external agencies. Martin reports to the steering group and its successor, which has agreed a programme of activity with him. The steering group sees it as essential to have a presence within urban and rural communities across the county and thinks this is only possible by a commitment to partnership working.

If you want more information, or to discuss how this initiative could help you meet needs you have identified, please visit WCIL’s website at www.wcil.org.uk or you can contact Martin Heuter on 01905 766052.



www.finditinworcestershire.com

Finditinworcestershire was born out of the County Council's response to the economic crisis. The project is designed to encourage and enable increased trade between Worcestershire businesses and organisations to help generate and keep more wealth in the county. It will have a beneficial effect on the supply chain, sustaining employment and ultimately increasing the standard of living of Worcestershire residents. It does this in two ways. It provides a web portal allowing registered users to see opportunities and supply goods and networking events. Finditinworcestershire was launched on February 15, 2011 with over 300 people attending. The launch event was just the start of a full programme of events to support local businesses, social enterprise and community groups.

The concept of Finditinworcestershire is that it acts as a match-making service for buyers and sellers, it will make business opportunities more visible, public and private sector procurement opportunities for companies of all sizes are available. Absolutely essential to the project's success are the free monthly breakfast meetings held every third Tuesday of the month, these have been splendidly supported by county businesses making the effort to meet each other from 6.45am! It just goes to show that there is still a value in meeting face to face. It is a time to make new contacts but also catch up with old ones.

Each month the free breakfast meeting is on a different topic or based around a sector. The next breakfast meeting is on Tuesday, June 21 and will focus on the automotive sector (greening and supply chain opportunities). The July 19 breakfast meeting will focus on the workforce of

the future and August 16 event is proposed to be on how to export. All events are held at Worcester Rugby Club with registration at 6.45am and finishing with a light breakfast by 9.30-10.30am.

To attend the breakfast meetings and other associated events you will need to register on the site (www.finditinworcestershire.com). This is quick, simple, free and what's more the information you provide creates your own mini site. Depending on what data you enter you will then receive emails tailored to your needs alerting you to opportunities. We encourage members to send us their press releases so that we can generate free publicity for them (details on the website).

There is also an exclusive Worcestershire Zone where we intend to keep our local businesses up to date with what is going on in the county, with updates about the Local Enterprise Partnership and area based grants and finance. The website also includes information on business support organisation, events, employment and local business news.

Since its launch Finditinworcestershire has gained over 1000 members and had 98 opportunities posted on the site. If you haven't registered already we would strongly suggest



Diane Tilley, Director of Planning, Economy and Performance launches the FinditinWorcestershire event.

Consultation on Financial Inclusion Strategy

Helping Worcestershire residents manage their money to prevent them getting into debt is at the core of a new Financial Inclusion Strategy produced by the Worcestershire Partnership.

The strategy acknowledges that income deprivation and poverty exist in parts of the county and that these issues are exacerbated by the recession and by unemployment, particularly youth unemployment.

In August 2010, the Economy and Transport Theme Group agreed to the development of the strategy to ensure residents can access the support required to enable them to manage their money more effectively.

Partners are being invited to make a contribution to the Financial Inclusion Strategy during a 12-week consultation period that runs from the Monday, May 16 to Monday, August 8, 2011. Comments can be submitted via a template and will be carefully considered. A note of what action has been taken will be published on the Worcestershire Partnership's website at the end of the consultation period.

Further information is available from Jane Ridgley on (01905) 728739 or visit www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk

Residents encouraged to have their say on local issues

Worcestershire Viewpoint is a Citizens' Panel set up in 2009 to gather public opinion about services provided by the County Council, the county's six district councils, NHS Worcestershire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

Any Voluntary and Community Sector groups (VCS) that work with people who have strong views about local services can suggest that they sign up to the panel and make their opinions known. Equally, individuals who work or volunteer in the sector could join the panel themselves.

Any Worcestershire resident aged 18 or over can join the panel to take part in two surveys each year. The survey results are used to keep key decision-makers informed about public opinion, concerns and priorities. Residents' feedback is now more important than ever as public sector organisations have to change the way they deliver local services.

The current Viewpoint survey will be running from May 24 to June 24, 2011. Residents are encouraged to visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/viewpoint for more information and the opportunity to sign up to the panel and complete the online survey.

We are keen to ensure that all communities across Worcestershire have the chance to be involved so please make those you work with aware of the panel and the opportunity to be involved. For more information, or to request paper copies of the survey, contact Claire Bloss in the Research and Intelligence Unit on 01905 822020, email viewpoint@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Stronger voice for VCS

Community First in Worcestershire has engaged consultants, Impact Consultancy, to develop a future model that will guide the relationship between the sector and other key partners. The purpose of the work is to enable the sector to show strong leadership and to create a coherent, more strategic voice that can represent and lobby on behalf of the sector.

The work will influence the way that the VCS engages with new and existing groups, including the Worcestershire Partnership, the Local Economic Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Accountability to the sector is also key and the recommendations should build on existing structures to ensure accountability with the wider sector.

The consultants are due to put forward their recommendations in summer of this year. New structures will be implemented in coordination with the development of the new Worcestershire Forum, which aims to have significant membership from the VCS.

Prove your worth

A two-day course designed to help VCS organisations to 'prove their worth' and win more funding and contracts is taking place in June and July.

'Understanding and Using an Outcomes Focus' takes place on Wednesday, June 15 and Tuesday, July 5 at County Hall, Worcester, from 9.30am to 4pm on both days.

The course, which is being run by Sue Fry and Rosemary Collie and is part of a national programme by the Charities Evaluation Service, aims to help VCS organisations to:

- Demonstrate to funders that they are making a difference,
- Increase staff and user morale by showing that change is happening,
- Identify outcomes for measurement using Social Return on Investment tools,
- Learn about what works and is effective, to improve services.

The course is being offered at a subsidised rate of £80 per attendee for the two days. To register an interest in attending, please contact Sue Fry at safry@live.com

Time to...

discover your local library

Library Membership Campaign March 2011

Worcestershire's 21 libraries ran a campaign during March 2011, specifically targeted at adults, to increase membership and awareness of the fantastic range of services and activities that take place in libraries across the county.

The Time To...Discover Learning, Skills and Activities attracted an extra 3,000 new members during the month of March. They can now enjoy a wide range of services, including free internet and wifi access, online and hardcopies of books, CDs and DVDs, magazines and newspapers. There are also adult learning opportunities and lots of exciting activities for both adults and children to enjoy. You can drop in to meet friends for a coffee, choose a book, use the computers/laptop or come and learn something new.

During the Time To... campaign, libraries worked with 168 partners, including many VCS organisations such as:

- Job Change
- Dial
- Community Action Wyre Forest
- Malvern Hills Volunteering
- RSPB
- Spice Community Group
- What's Your Point Youth and Community Group

We would encourage you and your volunteers to drop into your local library to see the changes!

For further information call 01905 822722 or visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries and to see the latest adult learning prospectus containing details of all our courses, see www.worcestershire.gov.uk/adultlearning



“Improving outcomes for older people”

worcestershire
supporting **people**
partnership



Support at home (01684 579 627)

What they do

Run by Festival Housing, the Support at Home project responds to people's needs relating to their housing and financial circumstances. The service also helps people to retain or make new social networks in the community. Support at Home gives people the chance to gain or improve IT skills through an in house tutor and the installation of computers in communal housing and office reception areas.

Impact on clients

The focus of the project is maintaining independence through flexible home visits. For example, John lived in a caravan in a remote rural setting. The location was such that in bad weather visitors could not reach him by car. This put him at increased risk as he had no running water or electricity and relied on others to collect his prescriptions and deliver essentials like bottled drinking water. Following a referral by his social worker he started getting visits twice a week from a Support at Home worker. Over the summer months the Support Worker established a relationship with John that enabled her to raise safety concerns regarding his use of candles and mobile gas. She monitored his health and organised GP appointments when his health worsened. Eventually, John was placed in a flat in a scheme for older people in a rural setting. His support worker helped him to furnish his flat, checked he was on correct benefits, arranged an appointment with the mobile hairdresser and helped him to register with the local GP. She showed him how to use the cooker and continues to help him manage his correspondence, form filling and budgeting. He spent a short while in hospital but his health has now stabilised and he has carers calling in daily.

Supporting the public sector

In an era of large public sector cuts, it will be important to encourage work that invests money and skills back into the community. Being a voluntary and community organisation, Festival Housing's business model allows it the flexibility to pursue other avenues of funding if it spots an opportunity. In an innovative twist, its older people's services make use of a fundraiser to raise funds for different activities, such as IT training – which recently gained £10,000 from UK Online – and a fitness programme which raised £50,000 from the Worcestershire Health Improvement Fund. This approach allowed resources from other funding streams to be invested back into providing high quality preventative health services and delivering high quality outcomes for the community.

Added value: the 'sector factor'

By focusing on flexible home support, the project offers an alternative to residential based care, which may be more expensive. Worcestershire's Research and Intelligence Team estimated that Festival Housing's support programme in Worcestershire saved £2.4m from other budgets and departments. Savings are achieved through reduced visits by District Nurses and visits to GPs; reduced hospital admissions for neglected health and falls; and delayed needs for residential care.

For further details please visit our website (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/supportingpeople).

