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Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations is a membership organisation representing the experiences and aspirations of Sandwell's Voluntary & Community Sector.

It offers a wide variety of capacity building and developmental services to charitable and community organisations.

SCVO Brings New Resource to Sandwell

SCVO's new funding portal allows instant, online access to hundreds of funders and contractors.

Our user-friendly system was launched on the SCVO website www.scvo.info in March and has already received highly positive feedback. The portal enables users to search for funding tailored to their organisation's needs. Situated on the home-page, just one click is needed to access the portal. After answering a few simple questions, users are provided with a list of potential funders. Detailed information around eligibility and current priorities is also available.

The portal is managed for SCVO by J4B Grants, part of Idox Solutions Ltd. There are over 4,500 financial programmes researched with daily updates to ensure access to the most up to date information. The portal gives information covering European, national government and lottery funding, plus regional, local and trust funding. You can use the site to research and find grants, loans, tax relief, venture capital and contracts to support your organisation. Simply sign up and start searching!

This new service is brought to you as part of SCVO's on-going sustainability work, aiming to make the task of funding searches less onerous and time-consuming.



The funding portal is just one part of SCVO's funding support. We continue to offer one to one support, training events and guidance on working with specific funders.

We will continue to promote and demonstrate the Portal at every available opportunity but if you would like support in getting started, please call Steve Baylis on 0121 525 1127 or email steve@scvo.info.

We are closely monitoring usage of the service and will aim to improve it as we receive feedback. Any comments or suggestions for improvements will be gratefully received.

SCVO STAFF LIST

- Chief Executive Officer:
Mark Davis

CAPACITY BUILDING TEAM

- Capacity-Building Manager:
Jan Bottle
- Organisational Development
Officer: Steve Baylis
- Organisational Development
Officer: Carole Harte
- Small Groups Development
Officer: Helen Trueman

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- Strategic Engagement
Manager: Nick Drew
- Network Development Officer:
Leona Bird
- Project Officer: Martin Drayton

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

- Database Administrator:
Janet Turton

Reminder: Support for Friar Park and Wednesbury South

If you are involved with a group that is based, active or has beneficiaries in Wednesbury South or Friar Park, dedicated development support is currently available via SCVO's Community Support Programme.

The type and range of support includes writing constitutions, choosing the right structure, running a management committee, finding funding and writing applications, creating policies and procedures, plus much more.

For the past twelve months, Helen Trueman, Small Groups Development Officer has been providing support in Rowley and Cradley Heath through the



programme. Support available in this area via this Programme has now closed, however SCVO continues to provide development support through our core support services and other members of the team.

For more information please contact Helen Trueman on 0121 525 1127 or email: helen@scvo.info

Compact Set to Improve Funding Relationships

With funding becoming scarcer, and organisations in the public sector and voluntary and community sector facing tough decisions, it's never been more important to make sure that financial relationships between the sectors are based on strong, mutually-agreed principles.

On 9 March 2011 SCVO facilitated a workshop between the statutory sector and voluntary and community sector to discuss and gather feedback to update Sandwell Compact's Funding Code of Practice.

In addition to the Code, the main Compact document is also being refreshed to bring it up to date with the National Compact.

The refreshed Compact and Funding Code of Practice are now available for you to view and to provide your thoughts and feedback. Please visit the News and Blog section at www.scvo.info

If you would like further information or to discuss this consultation further please contact Leona Bird, Network Development Officer on 0121 525 1127 or e-mail: leona@scvo.info

New Strategy Promises Vital Help for VCS

From April 2011 SCVO's Capacity Building work will be based on a new strategy. Taking into account the current climate and views of the sector, the new Strategy will underpin our work for the next year.

The Strategy has been determined by the results of the Support and Development Needs survey 2010, the views of our statutory partners and SCVO's own situation and experience. The document is

available to view on our website and comments are welcome.

In essence, the Strategy outlines our intention to continue to strengthen the capacity of the sector, whilst being ever-more mindful of restrictions on our own resources. As the external environment continues to be hostile, our survey indicates that the overwhelming support need from the sector is around fundraising and contracting. While we will continue to offer tailored,

one to one advice, this will be increasingly supplemented by training events, wide-reaching services such as the funding portal and project based local work. We will build on our past 'buddies' projects by building and facilitating supportive relationships between the voluntary, statutory and private sectors.

If you have any queries or comments on the strategy, please contact Jan Bottle on 0121 5251127 or jan@scvo.info.

VCS Look to New Routes for Engagement

It's 'all change' for the local partnership scene, with the demise of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) along with some of the partnership structures that we've known in recent years. SCVO.INFO investigates whether this spells an end to engagement or offers promise of new opportunities to strengthen working with local public bodies.

With a new Government and the squeeze on the public purse, it's been clear for some time that the term 'doing things differently' would be the principle applied to much of how local public bodies operate. This is certainly true for the Sandwell Partnership (LSP), which in the autumn of 2010 recognised the need for more rationalised structure going forward.

In place of the LSP comes the Local Public Service Board



– a much smaller group of local public service agencies, led by Sandwell MBC and including representatives from local GP consortia and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is, of course, a key player in these strategic discussions, and is represented around this table by SCVO. This Board will lead partnership approaches to solving some of Sandwell's most enduring challenges, in line with the Sandwell Plan – the local blueprint document for making Sandwell a better place to live for all.

Many of the changes at a more 'thematic' level are still to be worked through, although it's clear that a newly restructured Health and Well-being Board, including the GP consortia, will be in place shortly, and some of the well-established boards such as the Safer Sandwell Partnership will remain whilst others will continue their work in other forms.

Clearly it is vital that the VCS is recognised as an important partner within all of these thematic areas, and SCVO continues to work to promote the offer and value of Sandwell's VCS to ensure the Sector can contribute to these strategic conversations. And in response to this 'fresh start' in partnership working, SCVO is piloting its own VCS Leaders Forum, starting this coming May and leading up to a formal launch in autumn 2011. Further updates on this will be shared in future issues of SCVO.INFO

SCVO MEMBERSHIP

Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations is a membership organisation open to all community groups and voluntary organisations active in Sandwell. It's Board of Directors is elected from it's membership and oversees the strategic direction of SCVO.

Its broad base of members therefore provides strength and credibility for SCVO in giving a voice to the experiences, views and aspirations of the Sector and in delivering capacity building services relevant in a diverse and ever-changing environment. SCVO are always looking to increase their membership and welcome applications from organisations and groups serving any part of Sandwell's community.

For further information about membership and how to apply please call 0121 525 1127.

SCVO.INFO NEWSLETTER

If you would like to submit an article for inclusion in this newsletter or give feedback on any aspect of it, please call 0121 525 1127 or e-mail leona@scvo.info.

The deadline for articles for the June/July 2011 issue is Friday 20 May 2011.

VCS Can Shape the Future of Sandwell

The Voluntary and Community Sector's (VCS) engagement with local public sector partners is vital in the important work of shaping Sandwell's future. This was the emphatic message from respondents to a survey recently conducted by SCVO.

During the month of March, SCVO sent out an online survey to organisations to gather feedback about the effectiveness of the VCS engagement activities it currently facilitates by way of the Children and Young People's VCS Executive and associated Briefing Sessions, and the VCS Health and Social Care Forum. Over 70 local VCS organisations completed the questionnaire and a summary of the results are detailed below. A more in depth report will be produced shortly and will be downloadable from our website: www.scvo.info

- Of those who had heard of the engagement activities approximately half felt that:-
 - they had been successful in ensuring the views of the voluntary and community sector were heard by statutory partners;
 - had ensured that decisions about how services are designed and delivered are involved by the views of the voluntary and community sector;
 - had enabled meaningful consultation to take place on issues that affect the voluntary and community sector and their service users



- Improvements in communication need to be made to ensure the wider sector know who any appointed voluntary and community sector representatives are
- In terms of future strategic engagement support – having accountable individuals from within the voluntary and community sector came out as a priority, with the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the design and shaping of new services coming a close second
- In terms of future structures for Forums, it was felt that these needed to be voluntary and community sector led with public sector involvement

SCVO would like to thank all those that participated in this survey. The findings will help SCVO to develop and shape the future strategic engagement support it provides to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

VCS Opportunity to Influence Enterprise Partnership

The Black Country's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – as featured in the last issue of this newsletter – has made it clear that it is very open to influence from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). SCVO.INFO looks at this opportunity for the VCS to play its part at this early stage in the LEPs development.

Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, working with SCVO and the other Black Country CVSSs, has been asked by Regional Action West Midlands to establish the role of the VCS in the Black Country LEP. These new partnerships bring together local businesses and “civic leaders”. The key role of LEPs is to: “provide the strategic leadership in their areas to set out local economic priorities”. A significant part of its role will

be about “removing barriers to growth”.

The Black Country LEP have now established 7 “pillars” of work:

- Access to finance and investment
- Business advice and support
- International trade
- Planning
- Transport
- Skills development and education
- Communication and perception

The ultimate outcome for an effective LEP should be to stimulate, support and maintain economic growth so that the increase in prosperity improves the life chances of people living and working in the Black Country.

The VCS can contribute to economic growth and it should play a key role in working to ensure that the positive impact of this growth

reaches our communities, who in turn will contribute to further growth as entrepreneurs, workers, and customers.

It is recommended therefore that the VCS have:

- Representation on appropriate groups that is of equal status to other members
- A clear route into the LEP to be able to make an appropriate contribution
- Involvement in virtual groups around particular themes in order to ensure that the sector is able to have ongoing influence

If you would like to be involved as a VCS representative please contact SCVO on 0121 525 1127 or email leona@scvo.info. A more detailed briefing on the Black Country LEP can be found on www.scvo.info under the Get Involved section.

Exciting Times for the Brasshouse Centre

North Smethwick Development Trust (NSDT) and Sandwell Council have taken part in a national asset transfer pilot and as a result the Council has agreed to transfer the Brasshouse Community Centre to the Trust through a 99 year lease.

The transfer will enable the Trust to have the flexibility to develop new services and attract additional resources to improve the facilities.

Andy Sjurseth the Chief Executive of the Trust said: “Our ambitions are not just for NSDT but for the neighbourhood of North Smethwick. We want the Trust to



become a much more enterprising and sustainable organisation with the freedom to develop new income streams and able to plan for a long term future in the neighbourhood of North Smethwick. We hope that this will then have a knock on

effect upon the local area. Taking part in the pilot was not only about the Centre – it has helped to forge a much stronger partnership with the Council and we are confident that this partnership will continue into the future”.

Councillor Ian Jones the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Economy said “Transferring the centre to North Smethwick Development Trust will enable a new phase of service development to take place. I am confident that the Trust will make this a success”.

Sandwell Council is planning to use the experience from the pilot to develop a policy on asset transfer.

GET INVOLVED

SCVO is working to help increase engagement between the Voluntary and Community Sector and public sector bodies. The Sector can also benefit from having the opportunity to meet more often with each other.

SCVO aims to achieve this in various ways, including:-

- Informal networking events
- Facilitating thematic VCS networks and groups
- Consultation events on important local strategies
- Developing ways for the VCS to be represented on key local partnerships
- Supporting VCS groups to understand and to lobby Sandwell Partnership, its members or VCS representatives
- Promoting understanding and use of the Sandwell Compact in relations between the VCS and public sector
- Receiving issues from the VCS and raising them with the appropriate public body

For further details and to get involved call the Strategic Engagement Team on 0121 525 1127.

Pickles' Plans to 'Conserve' Voluntary Sector Budgets

On 1 March, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Eric Pickles told the NCVO annual conference that he was prepared to consider "using statutory force" against local authorities which cut their voluntary sector budgets by a greater percentage than their overall budgets.

What this might mean isn't entirely clear, but it illustrates an expectation by CLG that any cuts to voluntary sector funding should be proportionate and that there should be time for the sector to prepare for the implications of the cuts. This position drew an enthusiastic response from NCVO and other voluntary sector umbrella bodies. In contrast, the Local Government Association (LGA) pointed out that central Government telling local authorities how to spend their money went against the principle of "localism".

It is certainly true that the Minister's statement could lead to a reversal of some of the more swingeing budget cuts handed down by local government – for example, Westminster's £1m reduction in its voluntary sector budget. But whilst it is the promise of the "big stick" for over-enthusiastic budget cutters which hit the headlines, a part of Mr Pickles' speech which went largely unreported was his praise for councils which were finding innovative ways of promoting voluntary sector activity which go beyond the old-fashioned "grace and favour" gift relationship. He quoted the tiny Essex borough



of Tendring, which has replaced a highly prescriptive £50,000 voluntary sector fund with £500,000 "Big Society" pot, open to all organisations in the Borough and with few restrictions on the types of project it can fund.

Pickles said "the Tendring experience shows that Councils which simply cut their voluntary sector budgets, rather than looking at better ways of investing the money they have in voluntary provision, "simply don't get it", and that many Councils have recognised that "weakening the sector by withdrawing support would be a mistake".

However, we should be careful what we wish for. Central Government intervention in the relationship between local government and the voluntary sector will destroy that relationship very quickly – it is far better to arrive at ways of maintaining (or carefully reducing) voluntary sector budgets by agreement rather than diktat. SCVO will keep up its engagement through the Compact to work to ensure that, beyond this year's standstill budget, we get sustainable investment in Sandwell's voluntary sector for years to come.

New White Paper on Public Service Reform

In an article published in February, Prime Minister David Cameron set out broad proposals for public service reform, to deliver what he described as “the decisive end of the old-fashioned, top-down, take-what-you’re-given model of public services.”

At the heart of the vision is a presumption that all public services should be “open to a range of providers competing to

offer a better service”. Cameron proposed in the article a profound change of emphasis, so that state providers would in future have to justify why they operate a monopoly in the delivery of a service without inviting external providers. Also, there would be a presumption that services should be “delivered at the lowest possible level”, in an attempt to move services away from central provision – although what is meant by “the lowest

possible level” is far from clear. If implemented as a truly level playing-field for local providers, this could well be good news for the voluntary and community sector.

Latest reports suggest that the White Paper won’t now appear until after the local elections in May, with some suggesting that this signals disputes within Whitehall about the extent of reform.

Big Society ‘Community Organisers’ on Their Way

Last month, the Cabinet Office announced that it has chosen the national organisation Locality to run the Community Organisers scheme, a significant part of the Big Society agenda.

Locality will officially come into being on 1st April, and is formed from the merger of bassac and the Development Trusts Association. The contract, worth £15 million, will enable Locality to work with

5,000 Community Organisers across the country. 500 of these will be senior and paid a salary, while the remaining 4500 will be local volunteers. The Organisers will be responsible for supporting local people in deprived areas of the country to develop community projects. Their role will also support the government’s wider Big Society agenda by helping local groups to take advantage of the ‘right to buy’ and ‘right to bid’ initiatives – essentially supporting

voluntary groups to take over public buildings and deliver public services.

Locality has identified the first ten areas where the project will begin; these range from inner city areas in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol, to more rural areas in Cornwall and Norfolk. The Birmingham project is being run by Birmingham Settlement and we will watch their progress with interest.

“Place Station” Prepares for Lift-off

The Asset Transfer Unit within the Development Trusts Association is about to fully launch a new service – the Place Station – to help local groups find facilities in their area which might be ripe for community management.

The idea is simple – if you know of a community building or other

asset which is neglected, under-used or poorly-run, register as a Place Station user and add it to the map on the website. Once a place is added, other users can show their support for changing its ownership or use, post ideas about how it could be used in the future, or give details of potential pro-bono sponsorship to transform them into thriving community

facilities.

The site has been up and running since January as a “beta” prototype testing version, and is now being updated to take account of user comments. It will be fully up and running by the end of May. At present it doesn’t list any Sandwell-based assets, so get adding!

Radical shake-up of Criminal Record Regime and Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS)

More than nine million people working or volunteering with children and vulnerable adults will no longer need to register and be monitored by the state following an overhaul of the checking regime.

The proposals, which come after a review of the existing system, include:

- The merging of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to form a new body providing a proportionate barring and criminal records checking service
- A large reduction of the number of positions requiring checks to just those working most closely and regularly with children and vulnerable adults
- Portability of criminal records checks between jobs
- End to a requirement for those working or volunteering with vulnerable groups to register with the VBS and then be continuously monitored by the ISA
- Stopping employers who knowingly request criminal records checks on individuals who are not entitled to them

The government will also keep the scope of CRB checks under review to ensure that they are not dis-incentivising people putting themselves forward for volunteering.

Volunteering

Help Celebrate National Volunteers Week 2011

**National Volunteers Week
takes place during 1 – 7 June
2011.**

Sandwell Volunteer Centre will be celebrating by holding a volunteer recruitment event in West Bromwich on Wednesday 1st June and through their volunteer awards at the Public on Tuesday 7 June.

Your organisation could help to mark the week in a range of ways including:

- Have a thank you party for your volunteers
- Organise an open day to publicise your work showing how it benefits the local community and highlighting the important role played by volunteers
- Run a training session just for



your volunteers and combine this with a treat

- Nominate one or more of your volunteers for an award

If you would like more information about the events that the Volunteer Centre is organising, please contact Jean Taylor on 0121 544 8326. Email: jean.taylor@volunteercentresandwell.co.uk
Website: www.volunteercentresandwell.org.uk

Volunteering Matters in the West Midlands

A report has just been produced by the West Midlands Volunteering Development Council which is a comparative study of volunteering in 11 local authority areas.

Sandwell came out well from the assessment with the following observations:

- Extent of partnerships to deliver volunteering - very good

- Effective use of volunteering as a cross cutting theme - good
- Promotion of volunteering - good
- Volunteering structures in place and volunteering monitoring system in place.

To see a copy of the report visit www.volunteercentresandwell.org.uk and click on “news and events”



Volunteer Centre
Sandwell



Spotlight on ... Wednesbury Young Firefighters Association

This month we talk to Paul Ratcliffe, Chair of Wednesbury Young Firefighters Association.

1. Tell us what you do.

We are a voluntary, uniformed cadet scheme based at Wednesbury Fire Station. All the instructors, firefighters and volunteers, give up their time for free to run group. We meet each Tuesday evening for 2 hours and also have various weekend activities throughout the year. We provide positive activities based around fire service learning and knowledge for young people aged 11 to 17. They do fire service drills using fire service equipment to improve their teamwork, personal and interpersonal skills. They also achieve extra qualifications by attending the group such as OCN and BTEC qualifications. We also provide the opportunity for the young people, who are from across Sandwell, to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and go on residential trips across the UK.

2. What is your proudest achievement?

The group's proudest achievement has to be that in July this year we will be going to Slovenia, along with young firefighters from Binley to represent the whole of the UK, in the international fire cadet competitions. Saying that you have represented the whole of the UK in an international

event is something that not many people can say, and for the young firefighters in our group it means a lot to them to have this opportunity, and they will benefit greatly from it.

3. What is the most valuable lesson you have learnt about working with people in Sandwell?

The young people in our group come from all over Sandwell, from different background and cultures and they all have different ability levels in the different activities we do. I guess the most valuable lesson I and my other instructors have learnt is whatever the young person's situation is at home, when they come to YFA they can all achieve something positive and show young people in a good light. Not all young people are out to cause anti social behaviour, if they are a member of our group they get involved with lots of positive activities, not just to benefit themselves, but also in the community as well.

4. What are the plans for the future?

To carry on doing what we are doing. Although the fire service is facing cuts and the West Midlands Fire Service is facing bigger cuts than most, it is important that we continue, and maybe even increase the size of our group. We will definitely carry on doing what



we do now, and we will even try to start some new projects within the group.

5. What are the most important challenges for the voluntary sector in Sandwell in the coming years?

I'm sure most people will agree that funding is going to be a major challenge facing the voluntary sector, across the UK, not just in Sandwell. My group is fortunate to fall under the West Midlands Fire Service umbrella, and we receive support from them in the form of use of premises and transport, which cuts down on a lot of our costs. But even the fire service is facing cuts, particularly in the West Midlands, and my group, like a lot of others, will be more reliant on finding funding for projects elsewhere.

6. How can SCVO help strengthen the sector over the coming years?

Simply carry on doing what you are doing! The support I have received in my case has been excellent. I have learnt a lot about what funding opportunities are out there and the best way to go about accessing them. I didn't know SCVO existed till September last year, so I guess the only thing I could say is make SCVO better known to smaller groups such as mine.

GET SUPPORT

SCVO offers a range of services to support the development and sustainability of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations in Sandwell, however big or small.

We achieve this through one-to-one support, workshops and training events, and signposting and referrals to specialist services.

- Funding advice and information
- Governance support including start-up, constitutions, forming and running a committee and charity registration
- Planning activities, services and projects
- Recruiting and managing staff and volunteers
- Implementing quality systems and improving performance
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting to stakeholders
- Working collaboratively and in partnership
- Information on local, regional and national issues affecting the Voluntary & Community Sector

For further details and to request support call the Capacity Building Team on 0121 525 1127.

Local Area Benefits from Two New Grants Programmes

Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector are set to benefit from two new grant programmes that are being administered by SCVO. Both of these funds have been targeted at small to medium sized organisations, recognising that these organisations are often the best placed to effect real change in communities with small amounts of funding.

Our first fund forms a part of Sandwell's delivery of the government's Migration Impact Fund, and was launched by SCVO from December 2010 with a number of grants having been allocated in March 2011. We made funds available to support local organisations which assist migrant communities from Eastern Europe to make their home in the borough.

Grants were awarded to support a range of activities, such as: cultural activities and events at local neighborhood level; development of resources to better inform communities of how to welcome and include newcomers; provision of information and training to newcomers to enable them to familiarise themselves with the local area.

Not all of the funding was allocated, so a second invitation to bid was launched at the end of March with revised criteria. It is hoped that all of the funding will be fully allocated by the end of April and that more groups will be able to deliver a wider range of activities that support migrant communities in our area.

Our second grants programme, Active at 60, was again aimed at smaller local voluntary and community organisations. This fund came from the Department of Work and Pensions via the Community Development Foundation, and was again launched by SCVO in December 2010.

The programme's aim was to fund new and existing activities encouraging the over 60s to become more active, recognising that if people are active before they retire, they're more likely to stay that way when they stop working. With this funding we were looking to develop a number of 'Community Agents', older active people who would be able to encourage others to try new activities whilst using their own skills. One of the key criteria of this programme was to engage older people, who were not already engaged in activities or groups.

We received twenty eight applications for this fund, but unfortunately were only able to fund twelve projects due to the limited size of the grant pot (£34,203). The quality of applications for this fund was very high and this made the panel's job of allocating the funds extremely hard. We were very fortunate to have representatives from both Age Concern and the PCT on the panel, both understanding the barriers to participation older people in the Borough face.

April Charities Update

Breaches of Data Protection Pose Serious Risks

Two London Councils recently incurred fines of between £70,000 and £80,000 each for causing a “significant risk to individuals privacy” when two laptops were stolen from an employee’s home. The laptops were password protected and both councils had data protection policies, but they had failed to follow them properly by allowing staff to work at home using laptops when the data stored on them was not encrypted.

So what does this mean for your organisation?

- Organisations must have a data protection policy which is practical and suitable for the organisation’s working practices
- Staff must be aware of the policy, be trained to implement it and aware of the implications of failing to do so
- If staff work at home you must ensure that your policies deal with out-of-office working and that all personal data is secure
- All laptops and memory sticks must be password protected and set up so that data is encrypted
- If your organisation outsources its IT functions you need to ensure that there is an agreement between your organisation and the operator as to how data will be used and stored

If you handle personal information about individuals, you have a number of legal obligations to protect that information under the Data Protection Act 1998. For further help go to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO)

www.ico.gov.uk/Global/contact_us.aspx or their helpline 0303 123 1113.

Consolidation of Charity Law

The new Charities Bill published in March 2011 consolidates existing charities legislation into one Act of Parliament. Currently Charity legislation is contained within the Recreational Charities Act 1958, the Charities Act 1993 and the Charities Act 2006. The consolidation proposed in the Charities Bill aims to make it easier to follow charities legislation. For more information go to www.charitycommission.gov.uk or telephone 0845 300 0218

Red Tape Cut on Organising Street Parties

For most small organised street parties that don’t affect the wider road network, there is no longer a requirement in law for local authorities to advertise proposed closures or carry out consultations. Neither are specific signs or other traffic management equipment required. ‘Your guide to organising a street party’ and a new simple application form can be downloaded from the Department of Communities website at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/streetpartyguide or requested by telephoning 0303 444 0000.

Additional Paternity Rights

Parents of babies due to be born on or after 3 April and potential adoptive parents who have been notified that they have been matched with a child on or after 3 April 2011, will be able to benefit from between 2 and 26 weeks additional paternity leave if they meet certain criteria. For information and access to the government’s Paternity Rights at Work Tool go to: www.direct.gov.uk

Default Retirement Age (DRA) is to be abolished on 1 October 2011

The last date on which an employee could be given notice of retirement was 5th April 2011. It may still be possible to retire an employee lawfully at a set age provided that the employer can show that there is an objective and legitimate reason to do so. ACAS has produced a very readable guidance for employer’s booklet. Visit: www.acas.gov.uk Or you can call their helpline 08457 47 47 47

Managing Charity Assets and Resources

The Charity Commission has new guidance on managing charity assets and resources, an overview for trustees (CC25). To download a copy visit: www.charitycommission.gov.uk

SANDWELL VCS DIRECTORY

This internet-based directory lists details of a large number of voluntary organisations and community groups in Sandwell. It can be searched to identify groups that work with a particular client group, in a particular location, etc..

To add your group's detail to the directory call Janet on 0121 525 1127.

To view and search the database visit
www.sandwellvcs.info

E-MAIL UPDATES

Did you know that you can receive e-mails on SCVO services and events?

Currently more than 900 people receive 'SCVO.INFO' by e-mail each month and this list is also used to circulate up to the minute information on news, events and services arranged by SCVO.

To sign up to this list contact a member of the Capacity Building Team on 0121 525 1127.

VCS Invited to Take the Lead on Children's Centres

Sandwell MBC is preparing to tender for lead agencies to run its Children's Centres and invited potential providers to an informative event in March 2011 at The Public, West Bromwich.

The event was well attended by current and prospective Children's Centres providers and speakers included Barbara Peacock, Corporate Director of People, Sandwell MBC and Nicola Plant, Divisional Manager of Partnerships and Commissioning.

There are 20 local Children's Centres (some of which are purpose built) in Sandwell with a mixture of lead agencies including: Sandwell Primary Care Trust; Voluntary Sector; Schools and Sandwell MBC.

Under proposed plans, Children's Centres will be a Universal Service and be at the hub of a continuum of support for children, families and communities with additional needs. They will support the delivery of the following outcomes:

- Healthy start to life
- Early learning, communication and language skills
- Early identification of additional and specialist needs
- Successful parents and resilient families.

Centres will be rooted in neighbourhoods rather than wards and also catchment areas adjusted to take into account housing developments. Centres will reach out to the most disadvantaged families within their catchment area and continue to focus upon

children under five years of age and their families. There will be a requirement to utilise evidence-based practices and enter into effective local partnerships between the centre and a range of key agencies.

In terms of nursery provision there are existing service providers who operate the nurseries from the private, voluntary and statutory sector. In the majority of cases the existing providers will continue to operate the service and will not be subject to this tender process. However, there are some centres where the operation of childcare will also be part of the tender process.

The proposed tendering of Children's Centres brings new and exciting possibilities for voluntary sector organisations who might wish to consider bidding for a lead agency contract and explore potential for collaborative working.

If you wish to receive tender documentation and request helpful presentations from the event (which include advice on submitting a tender), email: Joint_Commissioning@sandwell.gov.uk



GP Consortia Really Going Places

One of the central elements of the Government's health reforms is to put groups of GPs in charge of commissioning local health services. These "consortia" are now really beginning to take shape.

Up until the publication of the recent Health White Paper, local Primary Care Trusts (PCT) took a lead on prioritising, planning and commissioning health services in local areas. However, this is now all changing. In November 2010, the Department of Health confirmed that PCTs would be abolished at the end of March 2013, with their role being passed to consortia of GP practices. PCTs are already well advanced in planning for the transition.

Sandwell's PCT is to be replaced by three GP consortia:

- **Sandwell Health Alliance**
– covering Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Smethwick and Oldbury
- **The Black Country GP Consortium** – covering Rowley Regis and Tipton, and the Parsonage walk in centre
- **Health Works** – covering the same area as Sandwell Health Alliance but different patients and also areas currently within Heart

of Birmingham PCT

The Black Country GP Consortium is one of 54 nationally which was awarded "pathfinder" status in December 2010. These pathfinders will be set up more quickly than other consortia and will test different structural and commissioning models, with a view to sharing the lessons they learn.

The main issue for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), particularly those which provide health services, or which advocate for people who receive them, is: how will these GP consortia build a relationship with the Sector? GP consortia, when fully established, will control 80% of the total NHS commissioning budget, a total of around £80bn, so they will have massive purchasing power and influence over the market.

Whilst we would hope that they recognise the huge importance of the VCS as a service provider, we cannot rely on hope – which is why SCVO has been engaging with the PCT staff who are managing the transition to GP consortia, to make sure that GPs are aware of the extent of the sector's role and of the kinds of services it can offer. There is a clear danger that



GPs view the VCS simply as well-intentioned volunteer community advocates and not as expert and innovative service providers, as many in the health and social care field are. Also, there is a danger that the three consortia will all engage with the VCS separately, given that they will probably need to commission similar sets of services, which will place an additional load on individual organisations. In addition, there seems to be a confusion between community "lay membership" of consortium Boards and engaging with voluntary organisations as providers.

SCVO will be tracking developments and working to make sure that the VCS can take full advantage of the opportunities offered – above all, that there should be "no decision about us, without us"!

Find Out More About Healthwatch

Join the debate and help shape Healthwatch for Sandwell on 11 May 2011, 1.30pm - 4.30pm at the Public, West Bromwich.

Local authorities are required to establish a local Healthwatch by April 2012, which will take over the responsibilities of the current Local

Involvement Networks (LINKs).

A local Healthwatch could be responsible for:

- Providing health and social care information and advice
- Advocacy around complaints
- Championing local views
- Monitoring standards

- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England

Places at this event are limited. To book a place contact Sandwell MBC on enquiries_personalisation@sandwell.gov.uk or call 0121 569 5516

BUDGET FOR GROWTH

On 23 March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP announced a package of measures to support giving, delivering what he called a 'Budget for Growth'.

The Budget included measures to:

- Introduce a Gift Aid small donations scheme - from April 2013, the new scheme will allow charities to claim Gift Aid on up to £5,000 of small donations without the need for Gift Aid declarations
- Move to a new online filing system for Gift Aid claims - fully operational by 2013.
- Change Gift Aid rules to allow an increased limit from £500 to £2,500 for 'thank you' gifts
- Reduce the rate of inheritance tax by 10% moving from 40% to 36% for estates that leave 10% or more of the estate to charity
- Increase payments to volunteer drivers - Mileage Allowance Payments rate to increase to 45p per mile
- Retaining the Community Investment Tax Relief (CITR)
- There will be a consultation on reduced tax to incentivise the gift of 'pre-eminent works of art or historical objects to the nation'
- Government will examine ways to promote the take-up of payroll giving

To read the full briefing please visit SCVO's website: www.scvo.info/news

April Funding Digest

Lottery Funding

People's Postcode Trust

The People's Postcode Trust, a trust set up by the "People's Postcode Lottery" in April 2009 offers grants of between £500 and £10,000 (£2,000 if not a registered charity and £5,000 in Wales) to small organisations and community groups for projects lasting up to 3 months in the areas of Poverty Prevention; Advancement of Health; Community Development; Public Sports; Human Rights; and Environmental Protection. Applications for grants of under £2,000 are considered on a quarterly basis in England and Wales. For grants of over £2,000 the next round for applications will open on the 11 April 2011 and will close on the 27 May 2011. Visit: www.postcodetrust.org.uk

Grant Making Trusts and Foundations

Woodward Charitable Trust (UK)

The Woodward Charitable Trust, is inviting applications from UK registered charities working with or in the areas of: social and ethnic minority groups; prisoners and ex-offenders; homelessness; violence and abuse; arts outreach; disability and the environment. The fund offers grants of up to £5,000 through their small grants scheme and grants of over £5,000 through their large grants scheme. Every year, the Trust makes about 50 grants through its small grants programme and around 5 awards through its large grants programme. The closing date for applications is 31 May 2011.

Hilton in the Community Foundation Grants (UK)

Organisations that work with young people have the opportunity to apply for grants through the Hilton Foundation. Organisations such as charities and other not for profit organisations can apply for grants ranging from a few hundred pounds up to £30,000 per year for up to 2 years that meet one of the Foundation's chosen areas of focus. These are: disabled children; children in hospital; homelessness and life-limited children in hospices. The next closing date for applications is the 3 May 2011. Visit: www.hilton-foundation.org.uk

The Souter Charitable Trust (UK)

The Souter Charitable Trust seeks to support projects for the relief of human suffering in the UK and overseas, and are particularly interested in projects that promote spiritual welfare. Grants are generally given to charitable organisations and not individuals. Applications can be made at any time and the trustees meet five or six times a year to consider applications. Visit: www.soutercharitabletrust.org.uk

The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund

The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund is currently inviting applications from charitable organisations to support projects that work with: carers; community arts and education; disability; older people; poverty and integration and rehabilitation. Grants are normally in the range of £1,000 to £10,000. The objectives of the Fund are; the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of good health and welfare; the advancement and furthering of education. Successful projects will either maintain an open, inclusive

Funding and Sustainability

society or promote integration (or reintegration) of individuals or groups into society.

The next application deadline is the 14 May 2011.

Visit: thetriangletrust1949fund.org.uk

Barclays Community Sports Award

Barclays Spaces for Sports has announced the launch of its new Community Sports Award. The Award is a new initiative to recognise the outstanding achievements of individuals and groups that use sport to benefit communities across the UK. Each month, the winner of the award will receive £1,000 for their group or organisation, a limited edition trophy and will be entered into the end of season award to win a further £5,000. Nominations can be made for any individual, group of individuals or not-for-profit organisation. All entries must be made via www.barclayscommunitysportsaward.com on or before 5pm on the 20th of each month.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation Education and Learning Programme

The Foundation is currently accepting applications under its Education and Learning Open Grants Programme. In particular, the Foundation is looking to fund projects that address the themes of supplementary education; developing speaking and listening skills for 11-19 year olds; and adding to the learning - preventing school truancy and exclusion. Eligible organisations include charities, local authorities, individual pre-schools, schools, out-of-school clubs, supplementary schools, colleges and youth clubs. They must demonstrate benefits to the wider community and include

partnership working that will result in increasing access to education and learning to all communities and age groups. The costs that can be covered by the Foundation's grants include running costs such as staff salaries and overheads such as stationery, rent, rates and utilities. Visit: www.phf.org.uk/landing.asp?id=3

Rugby Football Foundation

The Rugby Football Foundation welcomes applications from all clubs at levels 5 and below in the English Clubs Rugby Championship. The foundation seeks to invest in community rugby facilities, enabling them to finance capital projects which will improve facilities that contribute to the recruitment and retention of community rugby players. There are two different funding streams. The "Ground Match grant scheme" which provides grants of between £1,500 and £5,000 and the "Interest Free Loan Schemes", which provides loans up to £100,000. For further information visit: www.rfu.com/microsites/rff/

The Ironmongers' Company

The Ironmongers' Company wishes to support projects that provide opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people to fulfil their potential. Grants are only given to registered charities. Projects must meet all of the following criteria: for children and young people under the age of 25 who are disadvantaged; consist of educational activities that develop learning, motivation and skills; have clear aims and objectives to be met within a planned timescale; are within the UK. The Company is particularly interested in enabling primary age children to develop a strong foundation for the future. Visit: www.ironhall.co.uk

BBC Children in Need Grants Scheme

BBC Children in Need are inviting not-for-profit organisations working with disadvantaged children and young people under 18 years to apply for grants of up to £10,000 through their grants schemes. BBC Children in Need run two grant schemes: Small Grants of £10,000 or less per year for up to three years; Main Grants over £10,000 per year for up to three years. BBC Children in Need can only fund projects that focus on the differences made to the lives of disadvantaged children and young people. The next deadline for applications is the 15 April 2011. Visit: www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/grants/general_grants.shtml

Government

Free Website to Help Charities Find Contracts

The government has launched a new website aimed at helping charities and small businesses to find public sector contracting opportunities. Please visit www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk

For support with identifying and applying to these and other funding opportunities, contact Steve Baylis at SCVO on 0121 525 1127 or e-mail: steve@scvo.info.

To download the full Funding Digest visit www.scvo.info (under 'Get Support').

FIND THE FINDIT TEAM

Finditinsandwell have now moved to their new home in West Bromwich.

The Finditinsandwell Team can be contacted on 0121 569 2097 or visit their website at: www.finditinsandwell.co.uk

SCVO supports the promotion of findit as the place to receive contracting and tender opportunity news from Sandwell MBC.

Organisations who might have forgotten how to log in or just want to make more of the website can download a copy of the Getting Started on Findit Guide from the SCVO website or alternatively, email: martind@scvo.info

For advice and guidance on how to register or use findit please contact Martin Drayton at SCVO, tel: 0121 525 1127 or email: martind@scvo.info

BIG SPRING CLEAN IS BACK!

Good news - Sandwell's multi award winning campaign will run again this year.

Big Spring Clean events will start in May. Look out for information about how you can get involved at www.sandwell.gov.uk

New Council Policy on Land and Premises

This new policy brings together all of the policies that relate to land and premises for the voluntary and community sector into one single document.

Key changes include:

- Longer leases
- The introduction of reduced rents
- Updated model leases

The revised policy makes leasing arrangements more open and transparent, in line with the Sandwell Compact. The policy consists of the following:

- Council Policy March 2011
- Model lease, up to 10 years (shared responsibility for repairs)

- Model lease, up to 10 years (sole responsibility for repairs)
- Conditions of reduced rent

These documents can be found on the Council's Voluntary Sector Support pages at website www.sandwell.gov.uk

Further model leases are being prepared for land and for longer term occupation of premises. The section of the policy that will relate to asset transfer is also under development. For more information please contact Heather Chinner on 0121 569 3020 or email heather_chinner@sandwell.gov.uk

Searching for Voluntary Sector Support

Sandwell MBC website has gone through several changes and SCVO provides you with a user friendly guide on how to locate the Voluntary Sector Support Pages on the new website.

1. Visit Sandwell MBC homepage: www.sandwell.gov.uk
2. Locate "Choose a topic" in a pink box towards the top left of the screen
3. Choose "Advice and Benefits" from the drop-down menu and click "Go"
4. Scroll down the left hand side of the screen and click on "Voluntary Organisations"
5. Choose "Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) support".
6. Bookmark this page to your favourites on your internet

browser.

Alternatively, you can access the pages use the shortened link: <http://j.mp/h0A5dy>

You can now access helpful information about the following: Third Sector funding strategy; Voluntary Sector Support Budget; Strategic Commissioning; Framework; Commissioning Contacts; Rate Relief; Role of Council officers and News

Additionally, you can view all the downloads under the Voluntary Sector Support pages by accessing the "Related Items" menu on the right hand side of the screen. For example, click on "Downloads" to view a list of available documents from within the section. You can also "Comment on this page" and "Forward to a friend".