

# Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum Annual Review 2014



## Introduction from the Chairman

Like last year and the year before that, 2014 has been another tough year for the voluntary sector. Although the economy as a whole is improving, the policy of austerity continues, leading to increasing demand for services in the sector, combined with a reduction in funding to meet this demand.

It remains very important that, as the umbrella body for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Cornwall, we concentrate all our efforts on the delivery of our objectives and we do not allow the lack of funds to divert us from our aims. At the same time we need to remain financially solvent. We have been successful in achieving this balancing act in 2014, and believe we can continue to do so in 2015.

Looking forward to the year ahead, the Trustees still believe the sector needs to be more efficient and continue to hope to see more partnerships, collaborations and mergers. Meanwhile, Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum will maintain its vital role in supporting the sector so it can continue to be relevant and beneficial to people in Cornwall.

## About us

Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum (Cornwall VSF) started life over 23 years ago in 1992, when a small group of people came together to discuss issues for the sector in Cornwall. Since then, our membership has steadily grown and we now have over 450 members from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) that provide a vast range of services across Cornwall. The past few years have been an eventful time with many changes to the organisation and the sector. However, we have developed many successful projects, partnerships and consortia and continue to act as the voice of the voluntary sector in Cornwall. Cornwall VSF is an umbrella organisation for voluntary and community organisations. Our aim is to work with others to create a thriving voluntary sector that effectively services Cornwall and its people.

## 2014 Highlights of VSF Activity

### **Chief Executive**

In the autumn of the year, Cornwall VSF Chief Executive, Mark Richardson, was seconded to Cornwall Council to assist with the Devolution of Services agenda and Ian Smith, previous Chief Executive of Community Energy Plus, was appointed to replace him during this secondment.

### **Big Lottery Advice Services Transition Fund**

Working closely with ECCABI on the 'Blast' project, we have helped create a partnership to transform the delivery of information and advice by organisations in the sector, and help manage the current demand for advice sector services across Cornwall. During the year, we completed a baseline survey of current advice work among the members of the partnership. This identified the methods used by organisations in Cornwall's VCSE sector to give information and advice, the level of training available and the current demand for advice related services. Further work needs to be undertaken to identify the options for creating an information and advice strategy for Cornwall.

### **Healthwatch Cornwall**

Healthwatch Cornwall is the people's champion of health and social care in the county. It listens to the experiences people have of local, publicly funded care, whether good or bad, and uses this evidence to help inform and influence the commissioners and providers of services. We have continued to support the development and maturation of Healthwatch Cornwall, cementing partnership working arrangements with other parts of the sector. During this year Mark Richardson stepped down as chairman and was replaced by a new permanent chairperson, Jayne Howard, who is paid an honorarium for her work. Healthwatch itself took on two new outreach and engagement officers, who organise how Healthwatch Cornwall listens to people's experiences throughout the county via outreach event engagements.

### **Talent Match**

Talent Match is a Big Lottery funded scheme, designed by young people for young people, which aims to help those aged 18 – 24 who are struggling to find career opportunities. Cornwall VSF supported the co-design and delivery of this Liskeard based project.

### **Cornwall Compact**

We continued to provide support through the Cornwall Compact, a document which sets out ways of joint working between the local public and voluntary sectors.

## 2014 Highlights of VSF Activity

### **Promoting Change – Lankelly Chase**

The Lankelly Chase Foundation is focused on bringing about change that will transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantages (SMD). The Cornwall Promoting Change Project focuses on Women with Complex Needs and Young People in Transition from Youth to Adult Services, who experience severe and multiple disadvantage. During this year Cornwall VSF worked in partnership with six voluntary sector organisations in Cornwall; Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRSAC), Pentreath Ltd, Devon & Cornwall Housing, Young People Cornwall, Addaction and Trelya. The funding from Lankelly Chase supports the facilitation of an action learning set. We have continued to give small grants for individuals who experience severe and multiple disadvantage. We are also undertaking engagement to listen to those who experience severe and multiple disadvantage. The emphasis of the project is on learning and evaluation; learning and reflecting on how we offer support through our voluntary and statutory sector provision; how we can do things differently; and influence and inform commissioners. As lead partner we are responsible for the overall co-ordination and management of the project.

### **New VSF Services – Ideas Factory and The Beacon**

Following on from the successful launch of our new membership services in 2012, Cornwall VSF built on this in 2014 by launching new services the 'Ideas Factory' and 'The Beacon'. For the Ideas Factory, we brought together a team of experts from different fields to advise individuals who had new ideas for providing support to communities or sections of communities. Ideas selected for support included working with, and supporting, talented but disabled artists; setting up a training bank for organisations working with young people and nurturing skills and confidence of young people through sculpture work. Meanwhile, The Beacon is a service to support social purpose organisations in difficulty by introducing a protocol which allows support organisations to share information and work together to assist them. Six organisations are involved in providing this type of support and detailed online guidance has been uploaded to the VSF Knowledge Bank to help organisations avoid getting into a crisis situation in the first place.

### **Safer Stronger Cornwall Consortium**

Cornwall VSF have been instrumental in establishing the Safer Stronger Cornwall Consortium which aims to bring together existing organisations to create one flexible and multi-faceted organisation with the aim of improving community safety and reducing reoffending. As members of the steering group and consortium, we have provided expertise, information and governance support to the consortium as well as the administration of the partnership. During the year, we were pleased to support the Consortium launch at Heartlands on 12th June 2014.

## 2014 Highlights of VSF Activity

### **Police and Crime Commissioner for Cornwall and Devon**

2014 saw Cornwall VSF continue to work closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner office to advertise, encourage and offer advice and support for those applying to the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner Small Grants Scheme. As part of this support, Cornwall VSF ran a 'fit for funding' workshop on 7th May for prospective applicants for the programme.

### **Future Skills ESF Project**

During the year, Cornwall VSF delivered our Future Skills project focusing on the workforce skills needs of VCSE staff and volunteers. We carried out a repeat of our 2008 research into the needs and impact of the VCSE and used the information to write two new strategies: one on the skills needs of the sector as a whole, and one focused on Social Enterprise. We also carried out some further work on the skills and impact of voluntary sector children's and youth organisations. To summarise our findings three infographics were produced covering data in each of the above three areas. In addition, Cornwall VSF published its Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Social Enterprise Zone Strategy 2014 – 2020. The infographics and Social Enterprise Zone strategies are all available on the VSF website.

### **Cornwall Social Value Pilot Project**

Acting as lead on this pilot project with Pentreath Ltd, we continued to raise awareness of measuring social value amongst VCS providers and commissioners. We successfully did this through workshops, mapping exercises and one-to-one sessions. In addition, we produced an online guide to Measuring Impact. Created to assist voluntary organisations in measuring the wider impact of their work, the guide explains what impact measurement is, why it is important and explains a number of ways in which it can be undertaken.

### **Signpost magazine**

Working with Penwith Community Development Trust we have continued to produce three Signpost magazine per year, a free publication for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in the county. Due to cutbacks, we ended print production of the magazine in Summer 2014, but it continues to be available in digital format.

### **Knowledge Bank**

One of the member benefits we offer, the Voluntary and Community Sector Knowledge Bank provides an up to date information directory of services available. Throughout the year we have kept The Knowledge Bank regularly updated via many local sources to help our members with all aspects of operating a charity, social enterprise or community group in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

# 2014 Highlights of VSF Activity

## Training Matters

ESF funding allowed Cornwall VSF to promote the services of Skills Development and Training organisations in Cornwall. Training Matters was developed as part of a wider strategy aiming to support the up-skilling of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) workforce. Under this project, Cornwall VSF has undertaken extensive research of the training market and promoted these opportunities to the wider sector on a regular basis via its communication channels. The idea is to create a unified platform where VCSE organisations can gain easy and equitable access to the full range of training and skills development options throughout Cornwall.

## Community Assist

Cornwall VSF facilitated the creation of a project which provides pro-bono support to community groups, together with relevant training to increase their effectiveness. Topic areas included marketing, law, finance, architecture, accounting, training assessment, IT and web design.

The partners involved in delivery of Community Assist are Cornwall VSF, Business in the Community, Cornwall Rural Community Charity and Penwith Community Development Trust. A major event was the Power of Partnership conference, held in October, which highlighted the long-term, sustainable benefits of partnership working between businesses and community groups, including maximising income opportunities.



## Training and Events 2014

- **27th March – Launch of the Ideas Factory.**

An opportunity for VCSE organisations to suggest and receive support for innovative new ideas to help address gaps in service provision.

- **7th May – Police and Commissioner Small Grant Workshop.**

This event offered advice on how to apply to a small grant scheme established to provide encouragement, incentive and practical support for small local community groups which work to help make people feel safer and reduce crime.

- **21st May - VCSE Employment and Skills Conference.**

An opportunity for staff from across the voluntary community and social enterprise sector to come together to look at the skills and knowledge needed to survive and improve our services.

- **12th June – Launch of the Safer, Stronger Consortium.**

Safer Stronger Consortium (SSC) is a partnership of voluntary sector organisations who have developed a shared vision and operational model to respond to the needs of the people of Cornwall who experience severe and multiple disadvantage including victims and offenders.

- **1st July – Cornwall VSF AGM.**

A meeting to allow members to vote to appoint and reappoint Cornwall VSF trustees and to vote on a resolution to amend the Cornwall VSF Articles of Association.

- **15th October – Community Assist ‘Power of Partnership’ event.**

A promotion and celebration of the Community Assist initiative, which offered pro-bono advice from a range of professional firms, coupled with relevant training to strengthen the skills and effectiveness of VCSE organisations.

- **13th November – Governance Workshop.**

An event designed to ensure delegates understand good governance, legal structures, roles and responsibilities, trustee recruitment and can deal with when things go wrong, thus ensuring organisations can run effectively and remain compliant with relevant legislation.

## Training and Events 2014

- **27th November – VSF Awards 2014 - Skills for Life: Celebrating Learners in the VCSE in Cornwall.**

Dozens of Cornish charities and social enterprises gathered at the Eden Project for the second Annual VSF Awards, celebrating excellence in the delivery of learning. Achievement and innovation in Apprenticeship Schemes, Staff and Volunteer Learning Programmes, and Community Education were among the categories for nomination. Winners included the Real Ideas Organisation, Promas CIC, Inspire Cornwall, Carefree Cornwall, Truro Diocesan Board of Finance and TravellerSpace.

- **28th November - How to Build Partnerships and Consortia.**

This event was designed for organisations about to go out to tender for organisations to deliver services to 11-24 year olds across Cornwall and covered an overview of partnerships, what works well, the risks involved and what the Council expect when procuring services.

- **1st December – Best Practice Governance.**

A capacity building workshop to ensure organisations working with 11 -24 year olds are prepared to bid successfully in delivering relevant Cornwall Council services. Key topics included governance structures, skills of trustees and how to utilise them, lessons learned from failed organisations and what the Council will expect in procurement

- **1st December - Social Finance and How to Tender Successfully with Cornwall Council.**

Another capacity building workshop designed to ensure organisations working with 11 -24 year olds are prepared to bid successfully in delivering relevant Cornwall Council services.

- **11th December - Community Assist 'Mince Pies, Mulled Wine and Networking' event.**

Community groups were able to come along and hear from training providers and business leaders about the support on offer through Community Assist and how it could help trustees develop their organisational effectiveness. An event providing an opportunity to engage with the scheme and access professional training and pro-bono support.

# Our year in numbers

In 2014 we:

Published **518** news stories

Had 50,430 hits on our website, that's an average of **193** each weekday

Reached **1,398** followers on Twitter

Had **263** 'likes' on Facebook

Gained **137** new members of the VSF

Held events for over **400** people

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