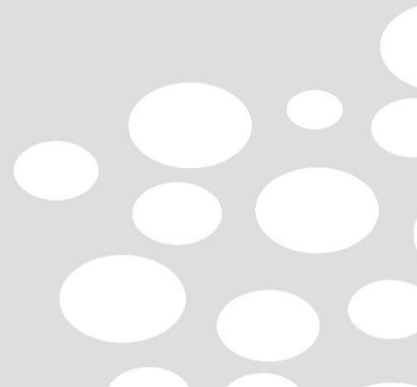




south
london
CVS
partnership
strategic but local

The Value of South London CVS Partnership

January 2012



funding
the Future
Enterprising, Innovative & sustainable organisations



1. Introduction

Our members support and develop the voluntary and community sector (VCS) across south London. We exist to support our members to provide even better services by delivering new, improved and more integrated services, making efficiency savings through sharing costs, providing a united voice and exchanging information and knowledge.

Since the organisation was established in 2007, we have developed a strong track record of delivery with our council for voluntary service (CVS) members and this report picks out 4 of our current projects which demonstrate our on-going value and relevance.

2. Funding the Future Conference, November 2011

Sustainable funding was identified as a key issue for voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) by the CVS in 2011 and in response looked into holding events for the local sector. However, they found that many of the key funders would not attend borough level events and individual CVS did not have the capacity or funding to host a large conference. We knew that national or regional infrastructure organisations hold conferences but the cost meant that small groups were unable to attend.

In response, SLCVSP hosted an event in November 2011, which attracted 194 delegates from small VCOs across south London. Each CVS contributed to the event financially and assisted in the design of the conference to ensure it met local need. By coming together we were able to run a conference worthy of a national infrastructure organisation (in terms of speakers and range of workshops) but completely subsidised for the south London Voluntary Sector. We received a total of 127 evaluation forms on the day, a 65% return.

- 93% of delegates rated the overall day as 7 out of 10 or above
- 89% of delegates rated the administration as 7 out of 10 or above
- 94 people who filled in their evaluation form included at least one action that they would be implementing as a result of the conference

#fundingfuture the best conference I've ever been to! Hands down! (delegate feedback from Twitter)

Loved it! We need more things like this. I have wanted to attend something like this for ages but it has always been too expensive. Thank you!



The image shows the branding for the 'funding the Future' conference. The title 'funding the Future' is in a green, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a blue dot above the 'i' in 'Future'. Below it, the tagline 'Enterprising, Innovative & sustainable organisations' is in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. Below the text is a black and white photograph of a panel discussion. Five people are seated at a table with microphones and water bottles. A screen in the background displays the text 'Question and Answer panel' and 'cvs partnership'.

The Big Lottery, Trust for London, City Bridge Trust, Comic Relief and Capital Community Foundation on the funder's panel.



3. Digital Switchover

For vulnerable members of the community, the Digital Switchover (when the existing analogue TV signal will be switched off and replaced with a new, stronger digital TV signal) is a huge issue. They may be less likely to understand the implications of the switchover (no TV) or access the support that is available to them. Reaching those members of the community is the challenge.

Digital UK has been appointed to work with the VCS across the country to do just that. In London, with 33 boroughs plus Kent, Surrey and parts of Essex all switching together, they wanted only a handful of contracts to manage. As a result, we were approached by Digital UK in July 2011 to work with the VCS in south London, covering 11 boroughs. The project was up and running by September and to date we have:

- Briefed 294 individuals working in 185 VCOs
- Attended 72 stakeholder events (such as Croydon OPeN Network and Richmond's Disability Forum)
- Attended 43 end user events (such as Sutton Seniors Forum and a tea dance in Richmond) where the Project Officers spoke to a total of 617 people in our target audience such as older people & people with learning difficulties.
- Supported 9 VCOs through small grants process to run events to help communicate the switchover messages. We have grants to the value of £22,000 for VCOs in South London.
- Distributed 3000 mailing packs to VCOs using the Postal SOS scheme run by Richmond Volunteer Centre and received some very positive feedback, including a case study (right) which was sent through all of Digital UK's networks.

4. BESPOKE project

A tighter, more competitive funding environment, reduction in grant funding and greater demand for evidence of effectiveness has created a pressing need for VCOs to access high quality affordable back office services to underpin service delivery. SLCVSP attracted 3 year Big Lottery funding to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CVS's back office services and passing the learning on to frontline organisations in south London. It is using the

South London CVS builds confidence of volunteers with disabilities



South London CVS found a great way of completing their huge switchover mailing in October.

They enlisted the help of Postal SOS, a service at Richmond Volunteer Centre that offers people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities the opportunity to take part in mainstream volunteering. Over 3 days, small groups of 6 to 8 volunteers stuck the labels on the envelopes, folded the inserts to go inside, and sealed and sent the letters. In return, the CVS paid travel expenses and provided lunch, tea and biscuits for the volunteers.

There were positive results for everyone involved. For the CVS, it kept the boxes "out of the way" and freed them up to get on with briefing sessions. The volunteers told their co-ordinator Ewa Gulczynska that they were "really happy that there was something for them to do" and that they felt "useful" and "really loved it". One volunteer, Daniel, said "I was so nervous yesterday and don't think I did a good job, but today I'm feeling great about it".

You can find out more about Postal SOS by contacting Ewa on EwaG@richmondcvcs.org.uk



collective past experience and commitment to achieve economies of scale without compromising quality of service. To date the project has achieved the following:

Reducing costs Research into *finance systems* identified ways for the CVS to reduce the costs of their internal finance services. Actions resulting from the research and benchmarking ranged from improving the efficiency of using current finance providers, to outsourcing finance functions and restructuring.

Renegotiating a *partnership HR contract* has created a discount of 33% on the previous contract (over £6,000 per year) and is better than other voluntary sector negotiated discounts. Tightening up contract management is leading to an improved service and is looking likely to reduce the amount of staff time needed to find the latest HR updated information.

MVSC and SLCVSP have been able to almost halve their budgets on Printer Cartridges and SLCVSP has halved its budget on paper purchases. SLCVSP is saving almost £600 a year through changing Broadband provider and receives a better connection. KVA and RCVS should be able to save at least £700 per annum on telephone systems if they programme the changeovers to new systems to coincide with their expected office moves.

Increasing efficiency We are currently investigating a shared south London ICT Cloud. The report is due end of January and if the recommendations are accepted, the decisions on how to implement it will be made in March. This will provide the tools for much closer collaboration and will enable the CVS to consider much more flexible ways of working and use of office space and it will enable them to provide the learning/experience to the local organisations they support.

New services A new south London wide training website is increasing opportunities for front-line groups to access a broader programme than just one CVS can provide. New finance services are being delivered in Richmond & Sutton and developed in Croydon & Kingston.

Evaluation/Feedback Independent evaluations of Years 1 & 2 of BESPOKE show progress made in communications and strengthening partnership working, leading to practical change. Feedback from the staff conference and Trustee Away Day demonstrates SLCVSP's ability to host partnership/collaborative workshops/conferences which result in new opportunities being identified and commitment being secured to instigate change.

5. The Perfect CVS

With the ongoing move to commissioning, the CVS are keen to ensure that commissioners get the best possible proposals and that they were 'contract ready'. In order to support this, and the development of good practice across the Partnership and wider sector, one of our major activities this year has been to develop a set of principles contributing to what might be the 'Perfect CVS'. The research provided two main areas: a set of service specifications which act as a 'shopping list' of expertise across the Partnership and an analysis of what might make the Perfect CVS.

The research was based on interviews with CVS staff, BESPOKE research, information arising from the NAVCA quality mark accreditation process and business plans. To date it has been used as an internal document and has been used by CEOs and staff when developing new services or restructuring organisations in relation to changes in funding. It has also been used to identify gaps in current provision.

The Big Lottery has expressed an interest in seeing the results of the research. As such we are working on a publicly available document.

Charmaine Sainsbury, Partnership Manager

