

Voluntary Times

The Newsletter for the voluntary sector
in the London Borough of Hounslow

Issue 79. July 2009



London Borough
of Hounslow

Message from Councillor Peter Thompson, Leader of the Council



Welcome to the July edition of the Voluntary Times.

The past 3 months have been alive with consultation events for the council. The April third sector consultation event enabled groups to have their say regarding the Hounslow Voluntary Sector Compact, the Corporate Grants Strategy and the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, whereas an informal dialogue with groups funded through the corporate revenue grants scheme allowed an uninhibited discussion surrounding council funding to take place. Activities such as these form and illustrate the Council's commitment to 'Duty to Involve'. By informing, consulting with and involving third sector organisations operating in the Borough in local decision making as a matter of course, communities will be given a stronger voice in shaping the area where they live.

Leader's question time is another example of how committed we are as a council to engage the community that we serve and July's event proved yet again to be an extremely popular and well attended session.

As a result of the responses given by organisations during such consultations, a review of the Council's third sector training strategy has taken place. The revamped strategy outlines a new annual training programme, enabling courses to be offered throughout the year and reflect any changes in organisational need or gaps in training provision. The new approach to training in the Borough will mean that employees, board members and volunteers will have access to a frequent programme of courses and groups are invited to regularly feedback to the CCICU outlining their training requirements.

Recession may still be upon us, but there has been a reported upside to the global economic downturn for many community and voluntary sector organisations in the Borough.

The widely-reported national increase in volunteer levels has been reflected locally in Hounslow; with notable increases in the proportion of highly skilled volunteers observed by a number of groups and organisations. This is a great opportunity for groups to take advantage of the wealth of experience and enthusiasm that is currently locally available and utilise any skills individuals may have which could be useful to supporting your organisation during these tough times; be it fundraising, finance or event organisation.

News Update

New Directory Live!

The Hounslow Directory of Voluntary Organisations is a well known and well utilised resource providing key information about the voluntary and community sector within Hounslow. Situated on the CCICU page of the Council website since 2003, the Directory outlines the categories, contact details and opening hours of over 700 organisations.

The community directory has recently been updated by the CCICU, making it a better and easier way for community groups and organisations to search for information. Third sector organisations are now able to update their information electronically and hyperlinks within the document enable direct links to organisational websites. Organisational searches can also be made by category, branch name or description, as well as by entering key words. The Building and Legal Directories are currently being updated too and are soon to have similar search facilities.

These amendments were made as a result of consultation amongst third sector organisations in the Borough, who highlighted that the directory in its previous form could sometimes be difficult to use.

www.hounslow.gov.uk/communityinformation

Appointment of new Minister for the Third Sector

Angela Smith has been appointed new Minister for the Third Sector in the latest Parliament reshuffle, a move that has been hailed as a 'promotion' for the sector. The Minister, who has been an MP since 1997, has been asked to focus on tax-effective giving and the reform of Gift Aid as her top priorities.

The move though has been criticised by the Conservative party, who have stated that the sector needs more stability as opposed to the 'revolving ministerial door' - Angela Smith is the third person to occupy the job since Ed Miliband vacated the post two years ago to join the Cabinet.

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/news/news_stories/090608_minister.aspx

Analysis of the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations released

The survey, which was sent out to third sector towards the end of last year will be used to measure NI 7; the national performance indicator which measures the contribution that

local government and its partners make to the environment in which independent third sector organisations can operate successfully. Covering various themes such as the range of local grants available and timely payment by statutory bodies, the main question contributing to the indicator relates to how statutory bodies influence the success of third sector organisations.

At a national level, results have indicated that when third sector organisations were satisfied with their ability to influence local decisions and their contact with local statutory bodies, 75 % felt the local public sector positively influenced their work. Only 3% reported a positive impact when they had little or no contact with local statutory bodies with few opportunities to influence local decisions.

At a local level, a large proportion of third sector organisations specified that they had little contact with statutory organisations in the Borough although of those who confirmed that they had contact, the majority felt that local statutory bodies valued the work of their organisation.

The Borough is responding to these results through the development of an action plan identify gaps in provision and any areas in provision which could be improved in relation to NI 7. In addition to this, a new Officer has been appointed by CVS to specifically focus upon strengthening links between the third sector and public sector in the Borough and other key activities in relation to achieving an environment for a thriving third sector.

For more information regarding NI 7, please contact Fuad Uddin, NI 7 Engagement Officer, CVS Hounslow on 020 8572 5929 ext 7.

www.nstso.com/analysis/surveyresults

Government spending on charities at a record high

Government spending on voluntary and community sector organisations hit a record high 2005/2006 a new report has outlined, with figures having steadily increased since the early 80's. Since 2001, spending on voluntary and community organisations has grown at a faster rate than the Government's overall spending levels. The report says that in 2005/06, an average of £36 per person was spent on the voluntary sector in London, compared with £13 per head in the east of England.

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/207672/spendingreportfinal2.pdf

Toolkit for infrastructure organisations released

A toolkit to help infrastructure organisations improve their effectiveness is to be released early next year by umbrella body NCVO. The toolkit will be based on a redevelopment of its existing performance framework, which helps infrastructure organisations to plan and review the work they do. Data from the programme will be used to draw up a best practice guide for infrastructure bodies when they launch policy programmes.

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Change in third sector policy for Conservatives

The Conservative party will potentially rid their original plans to develop an Office for Civil Society, as was outlined in their third sector green paper 'Voluntary Action in the 21st Century'. The Office for Civil Society, which was to have more responsibilities and powers than the Office of the Third Sector (OTS), was apparently devised in 'a different political age' for the Tories, and that the OTS as a young department, should be given more time to bed in. The over-arching priority for the Conservative party should they be elected, would be to restore public finances back to health.

www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Voluntary_Sector.aspx

Free property advice line launched

NCVO have partnered with The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Charity Finance Directors' Group (CFDG) to launch 'Charity Property Help' a service through which Chartered Surveyors will provide organisations with free advice on all property related issues. Third sector organisations will benefit from 1 hours free advice on issues such as property maintenance, environmental issues, leases, renewals and tenancies and planning issues with the aim of helping third sector organisations to manage their property assets more effectively.

www.charitypropertyhelp.com

Single equality bill for Great Britain

The Government has published a single Equality Bill for Great Britain which if passed, will bring disability, sex, race and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation. As well as bringing together the different strands of equality law into one piece of legislation, the Bill makes numerous changes to current law including the introduction of a single objective 'justification' case and a single equality duty. Significant changes to disability discrimination law are also proposed.

www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx

REACH guidance published

Communities and Local Government (CLG) have recently published new guidance for small or newly formed BME third sector organisations. The guidance, which aims to provide groups with basic information regarding capacity building, consortium formation and general governance issues, is the latest publication from the REACH project. This is a key CLG initiative aimed at raising the aspirations, attainment and achievement of black boys and young black men, enabling them to reach their potential.

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1281230.pdf

Training transformation

As of September 2009, the CCICU will be offering regular training courses for Community and Voluntary Sector organisations in the Borough. Due to feedback from our last training programme, we have decided to adopt a more consistent approach to our training by offering it throughout the year, based on two training questionnaires.

To influence the training offered by the Borough please complete the attached form and return it to us by the 4 September.

Please keep checking eVolve for details of our new regular training programme!

Funding Update

Free funding website launched

An exciting development this month is the launch of Funding Central by NCVO, a funding resource website enabling community groups, charities and social enterprises to access funding opportunities and receive regular updates free of charge. As well as support tools providing information on writing funding applications and tendering for contracts, the site offers an opportunity to collaborate with other organisations in the development of joint bids. A resource such as this will be valuable in the development of funding strategies and therefore thoroughly advantageous in planning the future sustainability of your organisation through the recession.

www.fundingcentral.org.uk

New Big Lottery Funding Strategy launched

The 2009-15 Big Lottery funding strategy has just been launched, which pledges to give at least 80% of funding to the voluntary and community sector and provide an extra £45m to help charities through the recession. This news follows their Big Thinking Consultation, which asked stakeholders and the public how its budget for new funding programmes should be spent. The extra £45m, which will be distributed in this financial year, includes £5m towards Awards for All and an extra £20m for the Reaching Communities scheme in England.

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/index/about-uk/bigthinking.htm

Real Help for Communities Fund opens for applications

Real Help for Communities: Volunteers, Charities and Social Enterprises is an action plan outlining £42.5 million support for the third sector in the difficult economic climate. The £16.5 million Modernisation Fund (loans element) is now open for applications and will help third sector organisations be more resilient to the impact of the economic downturn. It is focused on helping organisations providing services to those worst hit by the recession.

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/real_help_for_communities.aspx

£900,000 digital media fund opened by media trust

The Media Trust has made a £900,000 fund available to help charities and community organisations use digital media to reach isolated people. The organisation will give out £250,000 in 26 grants of between £1,500 and £14,000 to groups that work with deprived and isolated people. The grants, which will be made over two years, will fund digital media projects including films, photography, TV and websites.

www.mediatrust.org

Government Hardship Fund to open in July

To process has begun to access the £16.7m fund delivered by the Community Development Foundation; the fund announced by the Government in April's budget aimed at helping third sector organisations through the recession. The Fund will provide grant support to third sector organisations delivering front line services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in society and will be open for applications by the end of July. The Fund will be open to third sector organisations in financial hardship which is impacting on their ability to deliver services in the following areas health and social care, housing support, education and training and information, advice and guidance. Grants between £50,000 and £250,000 will be available to organisations with a turnover of at least £200,000 a year.

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector.aspx

Commissioning Update

Contracts consortium to be formed

A consortium of third sector organisations to bid for public sector contracts is to be formed by Future-builders England. More than 70 local and national organisations have contacted the government - backed loan fund, which is being lined up to bid for some of the biggest contracts in education, health and employment services. The consortium is now looking to bring on board at least one registered social landlord and any organisations with experience in writing bids, negotiating contracts and managing supply chains.

[www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk/
what-we-offer/services/pilot-consortium-
to-help-the-third-sector-win-contracts](http://www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk/what-we-offer/services/pilot-consortium-to-help-the-third-sector-win-contracts)

Charities could benefit from EU contracts legislation

Charities that have lost out on bidding for public sector contracts that feel the process was unfair could now be given the right of appeal for the contracts to be cancelled. Draft EU contracts legislation, the Remedies Directive, is currently at consultation stage and states that courts can cancel contracts that breach procurement rules and order a new tender process - under the current rules charities and other bidders can apply for damages if a procurement process turns out to be flawed but the contract remains in place.

[ec.europa.eu/internal_market/
publicprocurement/remedies/remedies_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/remedies/remedies_en.htm)

London Councils Commissioned Organisations

London Councils, the think tank and lobbying organisation that promotes the interest of London's 33 councils has recently commissioned a number of third sector organisations to deliver priority services throughout the region.

All of the grants awarded seek to improve the lives of people who live in, work in and visit London. Grants have been awarded for 69 services across 12 themes such as children and young people, crime reduction and health and social care. The services commissioned are accessible to all those who live in the Borough and London Councils are keen for the services of these organisations to be promoted as fully as possible. This will ensure that residents can utilise their services and the community and voluntary sector can link in with them where appropriate.

For details on the commissioned organisations please follow the link below, or alternatively, check the CCICU website for updates.

[www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/
grants/resources/boroughdirectories.htm](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/grants/resources/boroughdirectories.htm)

Compact Update

Parliament added to give Compact more bite

A ten-minute rule bill has been put before parliament that would put the Compact on a statutory footing. The bill, which has cross party support, is designed to give the Compact more bite and would give the Commission for the Compact more a limited number of new powers and duties such as establishing the commission as 'a permanent, independent statutory body' with 'powers of investigation where there have been inconsistencies with Compact principles, access to relevant information and the ability to impose a duty on others to cooperate with its investigations.' Although the bill has been outlined as unlikely to become law during the current parliamentary year, there is a good chance it will get through thereafter.

**[www.theyworkforyou.com/
debates/?id=2009-05-19b.1345.0](http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2009-05-19b.1345.0)**

Compact consultation released

The consultation paper on the revised national Compact has recently been released, produced by the key organisations associated with the Compact including Compact Voice, the Office of the Third Sector and the Commission for the Compact. The consultation closes on 12th October 2009 and the final version of the revised national Compact will be launched later this year during Compact week which takes place during the first week in October.

**[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/
226871/compact%20consultation%20paper.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/226871/compact%20consultation%20paper.pdf)**