



**Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Children & Young People's Forum**

**Monday 14 September 2015 at 1.30pm
Together in Matson, The Redwell Centre, Redwell Road
Gloucester GL4 6JG**

MINUTES

Present

Sasha Brown	Community Family Care
Tracy Clark	Young Gloucestershire
Caroline Eardley	Active Impact
Jan Foreman (Chair)	OPENhouse
Paula Hayball	PATA
Marilyn Jennings	YMCA Cheltenham
Rachel Preen	Winston's Wish
Anna Rarity	Healthwatch
Ramona Ray	CCP
Mercedes Thomas	i-decide
Helen Welsh	Gloucestershire Girl Guiding
Vanessa Worrall	Together In Matson

Apologies

Judith Bell	Teens in Crisis
Mark Bick	Forest of Dean Salvation Army
Kirsty Dunleavy	Active Gloucestershire
Kevin McPherson	Active Communities Network
Hugh Pelham	Community Family Care
Steve Robinson	Nailsworth Youth Club
Jem Sweet	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Clare Thomas	Hope Support Services
Elin Tattersall	GRCC

In Attendance

James Child-Evans	University of Gloucestershire/Gloucestershire County Council
Matt Lennard	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Eugene O'Kane	Gloucestershire County Council
Susan West	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance

1. Welcome and introductions

Jan Foreman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Early Help

Eugene O'Kane, Strategic Lead on Early Help at Gloucestershire County Council, said there are 138,000 children and young people in the county, of whom 4,500 are covered by specialist services. There are approximately 10,000 in need of additional support who do not meet the

Children's Safeguarding Board's thresholds that determine when children are in need of protection. This is where Early Help steps in.

Early Help supports children and young people aged 0-19 to stop issues from escalating. They rely on agencies, assessments and targeted services to identify children who need support. They co-ordinate support for vulnerable families and their professionals.

There are six teams, one in each district, with family support workers, early help co-ordinators, community social workers to provide risk advice and guidance.

What do the Early Help teams do?

- Improve access to information and support
- Improve data and information sharing
- Try to simplify pathways and assessments
- Create the right partnerships
- Support professionals working with children and their families
- Instigate whole family working to prevent duplication
- Build community capacity
- Measurement and tracking

Early Help will be linking with the work and development of Children Centres. The Centres are often in the right place but currently only support children aged 0-5.

There needs to be a fair and transparent way to represent the VCS and be inclusive. In Cheltenham the Positive Live partnership oversees what's happening there and includes Families First Plus, Inspiring Families, CCP, schools, housing, and Family Space. In Tewkesbury it's easier to bring people together in one place. Gloucester needs a strategic group to build better co-ordination in the city.

Eugene is open to suggestions to improve working with VCS organisations. It was agreed the current services provided by the VCS could be promoted better. The challenge is getting tapped into enough networks to include as many as possible while keeping things manageable.

3. Discussion on what the VCS can do to make a difference.

What VCS organisations want from the Forum

Jan reminded everyone of the Forum's mission, aims and objectives on the Alliance website at <http://www.glosvcsalliance.org.uk/cyp/children-young-people-forum/>.

It was agreed:

- To keep the meetings vibrant and interesting.
- To continue opportunities to network and share information.
- It's good to have speakers; they need to be well briefed.
- The Forum needs to improve its strategic and influencing role. To do this it needs better knowledge of what issues are coming up where there is an opportunity to contribute views.

How can the VCS better engage with Gloucestershire County Council?

- *Attending the right meetings*

It would be useful to know what VCS representation there is on existing county-wide groups and where else should we be sitting. It was agreed the VCS needs to influence discussions where the County Council is reshaping services that affect children and young people.

ACTION: ML

Matt attends lots of meetings on behalf of the Forum but does not always have the right level of expertise. The County Network Group and District Network Group meetings he attends are mostly about commissioning.

Matt and Tracy Clark have been advised by Francis Gobey, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, that children and young people are not a current priority for the County Council. Children and young people's needs are embedded across other priorities. We need to identify themes rather than look at issues from an age perspective and agree what we want to influence.

It was agreed Forum members could represent the VCS more at meetings and feedback. (These may not necessarily be Council meetings.) There has to be a level of openness and trust and understanding that individuals may not be independent as they generally attend on behalf of their own organisation, not the wider VCS.

ACTION: Any individual members can feedback on meetings they have attended. Please let Susan know in advance to include on the next Forum agenda.

- *Consultation and influence*

It was agreed consultation often happens late in the process once a strategy has been devised. The Forum would prefer to input earlier in the commissioning cycle before all the decisions are taken. It was noted that consultation timeframes are frequently tight.

The Forum would like to know more about how the Council is building its plan for the next five years, the key priorities and timeframes. Council and Cabinet papers are available on the County Council website, the challenge is extracting the right information from the available data.

ACTION: ML to find out the county council priorities and possible topics for consultation.

It was agreed we should ally with those in the Council who do understand the VCS and try and use their influence. Local Engagement Officers have been appointed on a geographical basis; these are voluntary posts within the County Council. Updated details of the Local Engagement Officers are attached to these minutes.

It was acknowledged the County Council has invested in developing the Alliance. Matt has been promoting the VCS sector and getting more doors open, but has found it difficult to make a strategic impact.

We need to let commissioners know more about what the VCS does and how it supports communities. It was agreed we should show case what goes on across the VCS.

ACTION: Forum members to bring case studies to share at the next Forum with a success story showing the difference we are making and an example of what's worked well or not well from a funding stream or partnership.

4. Engagement Officer's Report

Matt is attending a CCG update about the joined up care five year strategy on 22 October. There will be an event open to Forum members on 18 November to hear more. Please look out for further details.

Applications to the CCG grant programme, for projects using art to improve health outcomes, closes on 20 September.

It was recommended that Matt's report is higher up the agenda at the next meeting.

5. Any Other Business

If an organisation has spare secure, dry, lockable storage space the Guides could use temporarily for their performing arts equipment, please contact Helen Welsh.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on **Tuesday 8 December** at 6.00pm at The Redwell Centre, Together in Matson, Gloucester.