Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Stronger Safer Communities Forum

Tuesday 29 September 2015 10.00am
Victim Support, Eastgate House, Cheltenham

MINUTES

Present:
Ellaine Cameron  Relate Gloucestershire & Swindon
Karen Clark  Gloucestershire Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Rob Fountain  Age UK Gloucestershire
Norman Gardner  Gloucester Citizens Advice
Ramona Ray  CCP
Jim Rollinson  Gloucestershire Older Persons Association (GOPA)
Lisa Stafford  British Red Cross
Elin Tattersall  Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)
Wayne Stevens (Chair)  Victim Support

Apologies:
Robin Agascar  Gay Glos
Angela Gilbert  GAVCA
Jez Spencer  Fair Shares
Christine Sweet  Trust in You

In attendance
Richard Bradley, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Ruth Greenwood, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Matt Lennard, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Susan West, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance

1. Welcome and introductions

Wayne Stevens welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Richard Bradley, Assistant Chief Executive, and Ruth Greenwood, Policy Officer from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2. Update from the OPCC

Policy Officer

Ruth explained she had recently taken up the role of Policy Officer at the OPCC. This is an advisory role looking at policy and best practice. She is responsible for developing new policy, reviewing what currently exists and giving a response on national issues. She manages the Independent Custody Visitor Co-ordinators and said more volunteers are needed to reflect the diversity of the county’s population.
Over the next six to twelve months she will have an input to the Police and Crime Plan, develop an information pack for the Police and Crime Commissioner role for the 2016 elections, work closely with the fire and ambulance service, develop the role of the OPCC and respond to consultations.

Devolution bid

Richard outlined the proposed devolution plans for Gloucestershire, called “We are Gloucestershire”. The government is looking to devolve more powers, responsibilities and finances to local areas. There are two options: having an elected mayor or a combined authority where a new corporate body works together in a cohesive way. Gloucestershire is seeking combined authority status and the bid is endorsed by the County Council, District Councils, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, the OPCC and Gloucestershire Constabulary. There was a tight timeframe over the summer to submit the bid.

The bid focuses on five areas or ‘asks’ of government to drive economic growth and public sector reform. These are:

- Accelerating growth including planning, infrastructure, and transport – led by David Owen from the LEP
- Health and social care – led by Mary Hutton from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Community safety – led by Richard Bradley
- Finance and assets – led by the Chief Finance Officer at the County Council
- Governance – led by Andrew North, Chief Executive, Cheltenham Borough Council

Gloucestershire’s bid is currently the only national bid that includes community safety. This aspect focuses on three areas.

1. Safer communities – taking a strategic and cohesive approach to community safety. Currently there is no county-wide approach.
2. Integrated safeguarding so that the Children and Adults safeguarding boards work better together.
3. Youth Justice – creating local delivery models and a more joined up approach to criminal justice with better links between youth and adult justice.

The bid is currently being reviewed by government and if successful will be announced as part of the November spending review. There is more information, including the bid, at [http://weareglos.com/](http://weareglos.com/).

If the bid is successful there will be consultation to develop more detail and costings. The proposals have to be cost neutral achieving efficiencies by reducing duplication.

Richard has already spoken to Claire Mould, Chair of the Alliance and he is keen to involve the VCS in discussions.

Discussion

It was disappointing there had been no VCS involvement before the bid was submitted, even though the timescales had been tight. It was agreed to be positive about VCS involvement in the next steps and acknowledged both Martin Surl and Richard Bradley understand the value the VCS can bring.

It was agreed to create a position statement from the Alliance to send to the project leads. This would congratulate them on a successful bid and make the case for involving the voluntary sector in developing the next stage.  

**ACTION:** ML to develop the position statement.

The Alliance has the means available for communicating with the VCS but needs to have information to share.  

**ACTION:** ML to include the devolution bid in the next Alliance bulletin.
ACTION: ML to find out next steps and timescales between November and March

3. Gloucestershire Criminal Justice Board

Wayne reported the Board now meets every eight weeks. The September meeting focused on a close examination of the courts and CPS, specifically delays in trials and sending cases to neighbouring areas to reduce waiting lists.

The Board discussed proposals on court closures, particularly whether to close Stroud court, with trials moving to Cheltenham. Gloucester magistrates’ court is only now used for youth trials and a decision will be taken on whether to close it permanently. The court in Yate, North Avon is also under review. Consultation on the court closures is open until 8 October. The closures are prompted by the need for cost savings and an increase in digital technology where evidence is given by video, reducing the need for people to attend premises in person.

The Criminal Justice Board action plan, which includes engagement with the VCS, is expected to be reviewed and updated at the November meeting.

4. Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC)

Karen Clark, Services Manager explained that GRASAC is an independent charity working with people affected by sexual violence. It has operated for 31 years and last year became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

There is a Board of seven trustees, four employees and 22 volunteers. Volunteer training is Open College Network accredited. Volunteers have a three month induction period, then spend a year on the helpline before training for face-to-face meetings. GRASAC has met all the national service standards. They would like to employ a young person’s worker if funding is available.

GRASAC takes a person-centred approach and provides information and advocacy. They run a telephone helpline five days a week for two hours a day. They offer a therapeutic support for women and girls aged 13 years and above which is more flexible than a counselling service. They have an email support service, created after feedback from school visits, and have good relations with the sexual assault referral centre. They have created an education pack on healthy sexual relationships and trained teachers in how best to use it. Over 500 people attended last year’s Reclaim the Night March in Cheltenham. This year it will take place on 25 November in Stroud.

GRASAC works predominantly with women and girls; most have complex needs and would not use statutory agencies.

In 2014-5 there were 667 calls to the helpline, double that of the previous year and calls are already higher this year. 121 people were offered therapeutic support, many experienced abuse as children. The Summerfield Trust gave a grant for an electronic Case Recording and Management system which they have now implemented.

A large percentage of their core funding comes from the Ministry of Justice. The fund is due to end next March which puts them at risk, but not in danger of closure. The OPCC has provided a grant until 2017 and they receive support from the Home Office and local grant making trusts.

GRASAC does not collect data specifically on people aged 65+ but they have seen a rise in 55-65 year olds who experienced historical sexual abuse. It was agreed GOPA and Age UK Gloucestershire could help with awareness raising. Engagement with the BME community has risen. Karen acknowledged they need to engage more with older people, BME community and those with learning disabilities.
5. **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting on April were reviewed and agreed.

- WS will consider inviting Kath Rees to give an update on Active Communities in future.
- WS and ML had revised the Forum’s Terms of Reference. These will be circulated with these minutes and added to the Alliance website.

**ACTION:** SW

- WS reminded everyone the Forum will only be as vibrant as its membership and everyone is encouraged to raise topics for discussion.
- WS/ML are still to develop an action plan.
- ML will contact Amanda Segelov at the OPCC again about what the VCS can offer to the Out of Court Scrutiny panel and how best the VCS can influence and lobby.
- Jez Spencer had provided WS with feedback for the GCJB.

6. **Round table update**

**GRCC.** Elin reported GRCC has sent parish councils a CD on community emergency planning. Using parent champions to discuss access to free nursery/child care places has gone well. The focus is expected to change to consultation on changes in early years provision.

Four bids were put forward for the Building Better Opportunities Project including a joint bid from GRCC, County Council, University and National Star College. An announcement is expected in early November. It is hoped one lead organisation will be appointed to work with partners and start delivery in August 2016.

**Red Cross.** Lisa reported that the OPCC has funded a project to deliver every day first aid courses and safety measures, for example on cyber security. This is working well and opening new opportunities.

**Age UK Gloucestershire.** Rob said Age UK Gloucestershire has seen an upsurge in scam calls. Although Age UK publishes a Stay Safe Stay Smart booklet on financial security, he emphasised the need to increase people’s confidence.

**Relate.** Ellaine highlighted that Relate has spaces on its Young Survivors programme for 16-25 year olds who have experienced domestic violence. Comic Relief has funded a service for over 25s until next summer. Relate also offers a free service for couples on domestic abuse.

**GOPA.** Jim emphasised the need for more awareness raising and partnership working to counter the rise in financial scams. GOPA is holding an information session at the café at Gloucester Crematorium on 4 October. He is happy to publicise other organisations in GOPA’s newsletter and to collaborate on events.

**Gloucester Citizens Advice.** Norman highlighted CAB’s work on scams. He said people often don’t come forward because they are embarrassed about what has happened and financial abuse is under-reported. He is keen to work closely with other organisations and develop more partnerships.

**Victim Support.** Wayne said that victim fraud is growing and that the local VS team are developing our offer of support in this area.

**VCS Alliance.** Matt reported that VCS places at Connecting Gloucestershire have all been taken up. The event is about building relationships between businesses and voluntary organisations,
especially on professional volunteering and governance. After the event a Business and Voluntary Sector Forum will be created and run by the Growth Hub. On 18 November the CCG is presenting on their strategy for joining up care. He will ask them to talk about the devolution bid. This event will be open to all VCS organisations, but it will be necessary to book a place.

7. Date of next meeting

It was agreed to aim to hold three meetings a year. WS to send a schedule of dates for 2016

ACTION: WS/SW