



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

**Tuesday 21 April 2015 at 6.00pm
Together in Matson, The Redwell Centre, Redwell Road
Gloucester GL4 6JG**

MINUTES

Present

Robin Agascar	Gay Glos
Jan Foreman (Chair)	OPENhouse
Peter Guns	Gloucestershire Boys Brigade
Dave Hall	Gloucestershire Scouts
Marilyn Jennings	Gloucester and Cheltenham YMCA
Doreen Jones	Family Lives
Kevin McPherson	Active Communities Network
John McLaughlin	Community Foster Care and Community Family Care
Hugh Pelham	Community Foster Care and Community Family Care
Catherine Roberts	Gymnasion Woodland Project
Helen Welsh	Gloucestershire Girl Guiding
Vanessa Worrall	Together In Matson

Apologies

Sue Barker	PATA
Tracy Clark	Young Gloucestershire
Alex Corgier	Home Start Stroud
Simon Gillings	Youth & Community Services CIC
Amanda James	BITC Business Connector
Maddie Massey	Active Gloucestershire
Ramona Ray	CCP
Steve Robinson	Nailsworth Youth Club
Ele Semadeni	Gloucestershire Young Carers
Clare Thomas	Hope Support Services
Tracy Young	Nailsworth Youth Club

In Attendance

Matt Lennard	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Jem Sweet	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Susan West	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance

1. Welcome and introductions

Jan Foreman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 12 February were agreed with one amendment. The last meeting was seen as very positive, although some funders did not focus on young people as much as hoped. The new PATA Chief Executive, when appointed, will be invited to the Forum.

3. Building Better Opportunities Project

ML reported that stage one of the project was now complete with GRCC and GAVCA sharing information on the funding. They now have an additional £5000 grant to build consortia. Barbara Pond from GRCC has contacted everyone who has expressed interest and is looking for an organisation to take the lead. There is a question whether any one charity in Gloucestershire is large enough to take on this responsibility. Despite feedback to the Big Lottery Fund it looks as though they will only accept one bid. There are still opportunities to approach whoever takes the lead and deliver a specific piece of work. GRCC is holding an event on 19 May for those who have expressed an interest; 70 groups have signed up so far.

The Big Lottery has updated their website at: <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/building-better-opportunities>.

Partnership working is likely to be more common in the future especially for EU and lottery funding, hence the theme for this meeting to share expertise and pool ideas.

4. Partnership Working

Kevin McPherson introduced Active Communities Network.

Active Communities Network was set up in 2007 in South London with funding from Sport England's Active Development fund. They grew very quickly and now work principally in London, Belfast and Manchester with partners in most cities across the country. They use sport as a pathway to move young people aged 14-25 into further education or employment.

ACN has strong roots in developing partnerships and works with 250 VCS organisations across the UK. They employ 16 -18 people and offer back office support for their smaller partners, lobby government and get people to buy-in to the power of sport. Independent impact reports give their programme credibility.

They don't currently operate in Gloucestershire and are keen to get involved with Children and Young People and sport in the county. They are taking time to decide what they want to achieve in Gloucestershire, but have no ambition to take over or employ people.

Successes:

- Funders are treated as partners. They have agreements with corporate funders whether their donations are small or large. It's important for the long term that funders own some of the programme.
- All their service providers and employers are treated as partners. They encourage employers to get alongside young people, for example through mentoring.
- They use athletes as ambassadors and role models to champion their cause, lobby and bring people together.

Benefits:

- Being in a consortia gives better access to regional and national funding.
- Resources are shared, for example five to six small charities share one administrator.
- The database is shared between members.
- If two organisations work with the same young people, both can share the outcomes.
- Working in partnership doesn't have to be long term. It could be from three months working on a project to a long term strategic partnership and anywhere in between.

Good practice:

- Successful partners must have a shared vision, be like-minded with similar goals.

- Everyone is considered trustworthy and supportive throughout the organisation
- Spark creativity, new ideas and ways of working
- Identify clear roles
- Be clear about the reasons for the partnership
- Pool resources
- The ultimate test is the end user – does the partnership benefit young people?

Partnerships are unsuccessful where:

- There is a lack of commitment
- Ownership is unclear
- People are doing it because they are asked to

A boxing club in South London is an example of a small organisation who have benefited from ACN. The club was run by 12 volunteers with a paid coach and had a history of developing world champions. They came to ACN for advice on how to grow and outreach to young people in the community. ACN helped to find new premises, shared ideas for income generation and supported an outreach programme using boxing. The original club now has 20 boxing clubs in its network. They have developed through income generation, grant funding and influencing others in their area using sport for change and development.

The club used their assets to grow. They had a good history of developing elite boxers and used patrons who had been to the gym as motivators. ACN offered specialist support with marketing, publicity and the website. Capacity was the main issue followed by skills and time.

Discussion and comments

Partnerships with funders and service deliverers are different, requiring separate protocols, terms of agreement and operation.

Funders tend to look at the short term rather than having a long term view.

Partnerships take time and go wrong when they are forced. It can be difficult when people are forced into partnerships because that is what funders want. Small organisations can see potential funding opportunities and are tempted to overpromise.

The West Kent partnership agreement has produced toolkits offering practical guides. <http://www.vawk.org.uk/Information-and-Support/Toolkits>.

Active Communities Network has found the key to dividing work is by geographical area and then expertise. One organisation may deliver 50 sports programmes in an area, another will provide training. ACN is independent and acts as the glue in the middle. In contrast in Gloucestershire the lead agency is usually involved in delivery and that can lead to difficulties.

Governance needs to be strong and it should be clear who the decision makers are.

Plenty of youth workers use sport but don't have the capacity for outreach, especially as youth organisations have closed because of lack of funding.

What works well:

- Have clear objectives and targets for each partner and a shared ethos.
- Build good, strong relationships with everyone involved.

Reasons for choosing a partner:

- Personal contact.

- Expertise
- An organisation you can trust and have confidence in.

Networking opportunities

- This Forum.
- Connecting Gloucestershire an event bringing the VCS and business together. It aims to give business a better understanding of charity governance and charities a better understanding of business ethics and workloads.
- Involve Gloucestershire is a programme developed with CCP about professional volunteering aiming to build partnerships with business to second people to the voluntary sector. It will be delivered through an online platform where businesses say what they can offer and charities can say what they are looking for. The VCS can offer development opportunities for people in business to work for a charitable organisation eg in marketing or HR or as a trustee. Involve Gloucestershire will be launched on 13 May at the Gloucestershire Business Show. Steve Harris from CCP will broker opportunities. Gloucester City Council has signed up and completed a skills audit of their staff.
- Social media – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.
- It needs time and effort.

5. Engagement Officer's Report

Gloucestershire County Council has been given a one-off Department of Education Innovations Fund grant of £1.5m to restructure and integrate social care, youth support and mental health services for highly vulnerable 11-16s.

ACTION: ML to invite Francis Gobey to speak at the next Forum

ACTION: ML to invite Kath Rees, Lead Commissioner to talk about Active Communities at the next Forum.

It was agreed to invite the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to speak on funding, at a future date.

The Alliance is setting up an Operational Board to be its voting membership and direct the Alliance on a day-to-day basis. 12 people have signed up so far with a good representation across the VCS and from Children and Young People.

Philip Williams sits on the Strategic Board to represent the County Council but is not a Trustee.

The Alliance AGM takes place on 30 April, all are welcome.

6. Any Other Business

- Gloucestershire Girl Guiding has funding for first aid training for 16-18 year olds.
- The YMCA is opening a 16 bed unit in central Gloucester very soon.
- Young people can now self refer if they are homeless.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday 15 June at 1.30pm at Together in Matson.

There will be a summer meeting at the Guide Headquarters at Deer Park, Cowley on 21 July at 6pm with a barbecue, please bring your own food to cook.