

Commissioning and Procurement Sub-Committee 13.04.21

Voluntary Sector Update – Nottingham CVS

Support to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) during COVID-19:

Volunteering: Over the past year NCVS saw a huge surge in volunteering enquiries in April 2020 with smaller peaks in June and July. There was the usual January peak in 2021 as well. Our Volunteer Centre have had approx 2300 enquiries across the year - almost double the 2019 - 20 number

In contrast, the total number of available volunteering opportunities fell from about 600 to just approx 200. Individual opportunities are available on the new NCVS website so citizens interested in Volunteering have been able to self-register and be matched to available opportunities across the city throughout the last year of lockdown. Expired opportunities are removed and new ones added onto our site on a daily basis. A significant trend has been an increase in the number of befriending-type opportunities (mainly over the phone) and also driving roles.

We have developed 239 new volunteer roles with a significant proportion of them being with small groups both new and existing. This work continues with approx.15 new roles in development at any time.

NCVS Group Development: NCVS continues to work remotely, delivering group support sessions via video link, phone or email. This work is part funded by arrangement with Area Based and Community of Identity Leads however, there are a still lot of groups in the city who 'slip through the net'. In addition there is no free training available for those very small, grassroots groups who cannot afford even the low-cost training offered by NCVS.

The voluntary sector has been widely recognised as playing a vital role in supporting communities and vulnerable people directly affected by the pandemic. There is no doubt that without volunteers, grass roots organisations and front line staff in the sector many more people would have suffered. NCVS is concerned about the number of groups and organisations in the city who cannot access local support and funding. We remain keen to discuss in detail a more efficient way of ensuring equal access to VCSE support and development across the city for all groups.

State of the Sector Report.

There has not been a citywide report conducted on the state of Nottingham's VCSE for some time now. Some organisations/groups have survived the past year but some have not. As we enter a new phase of the pandemic, it is crucial that this report be undertaken in order to have more definitive information on the true impact of COvid-19 in order to inform a roadmap to recovery and to ensure the sector is firmly embedded in wider systems as equal partners with the public sector.

NCVS Training Programme: NCVS have redesigned its training programme to be accessible and user friendly in a virtual world. The 2020/21 programme has additional sessions in response to demand: Mental Health Awareness, Is your Insurance Appropriate? and Health and Safety Risk Assessments. Our pdf training brochure can be [viewed online here](#).

There has been a huge demand for VCSE Safeguarding training during lockdown – accessible Safeguarding training is a big gap in the city. Again, those groups who cannot

access even the low cost training offered by NCVS will need Safeguarding training in order to apply to many funders. NCVS has managed to run a programme during lockdown in order to train a long waiting list, but more training will be required as we hopefully move into a COVID recovery phase. With the welcome news of Government funding for Holiday Activities and Food Programmes, we anticipate that this demand will continue to grow.

VCSE Corona virus specific support: We have kept the new NCVS website page dedicated to COVID-19 emergency resources (including funding streams) up to date throughout the last year. It provides links to reliable sources of Government resources or VCSE sector specific resources.

NCVS also gathers information on where support is most needed and those community groups who can support others during this emergency situation. We have also been sharing best practice guidance on how local people can volunteer in Nottingham and regular blogs which will now include how to return to Volunteering safely. .

Networks and voice: NCVS continues to host network meetings during the pandemic, continuing to provide a forum for local organisations to connect, have their voices heard and collaborate:

- Children and Young People Providers Network
- Vulnerable Adults Providers Network
- Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Leaders of Volunteers Network

Through our regular e-bulletin and social media channels, we share information with the sector about campaigns, surveys, the latest jobs etc. The NCVS website emergency pages includes urgent appeals for donations, changes to service delivery, emergency grants and other support which we've been made aware of locally.

Funding Updates:

- **Green Social Prescribing:**
NCVS is playing a key role in a new two-year partnership project aimed at improving the mental wellbeing of communities hardest hit by Coronavirus. Green social prescribing is about connecting people with nature and their local environments (such as local Walking for Health schemes), active travel (such as walking or cycling), local park runs, community gardening and food growing projects, as well as conservation volunteering, green gyms, and arts and cultural activities which take place outdoors and also aid nature connectedness (taking the time to notice and enjoy nature).

The project is funded nationally by the Department of Health and Social Care, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England, Sport England, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and the National Academy for Social Prescribing. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS) applied to deliver the two-year project from April 2021 to March 2023 and will test how to make green social prescribing an integral part of supporting local communities in order to:

- Improve mental health outcomes
- Reduce health inequalities
- Reduce demand on the health and social care system
- Develop best practice in making green social activities more resilient and accessible.

NCVS will be leading the programme on a day to day basis, working closely with Framework and the Canal & River Trust East Midlands alongside other local partners across the city to enhance the nature-based offer by:

- Developing green volunteering opportunities, capacity and capability
- Enhancing the connections between nature-based providers and health and social care
- Delivering targeted nature-based interventions, making green prescriptions a part of everyday life.
- Investing in the community and voluntary sector
- Communicating green opportunities and engaging communities in green co-production

Communities targeted will be some of the most deprived communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely:

- People living with long term conditions, especially older people
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- Families living in disadvantaged communities and in particular, those without access to gardens, balconies or green space

The Green Social Prescribing Programme will launch in May during Mental Health Awareness Week (10 May – 16 May). The theme for the week is nature and the benefits engaging in nature-based activities have on our mental health.

In June, we will also be launching our Green Grant Scheme for community and voluntary organisations to enhance or develop their nature-based activities.

- Community Asset Assessment (CAA):
NCVS has now completed the CAA programme that was commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) 12 events were organised in order to identify where and what community assets exist to reduce or prevent serious crime (weapon enabled crime, domestic abuse and serious cases of ABH and GBH), what makes communities feel safe and where the gaps are. We shall now submit a detailed report to the VRU and have circulated our local findings to those groups and organisations who took part in the future.
- Practice Development Unit:
The PDU is a partnership between Opportunity Nottingham and NCVS. Its aims are to promote and facilitate collaborative learning and the sharing of good practice and expertise amongst professionals in Nottingham and neighbouring areas, who work with people experiencing multiple disadvantage (such as mental health, substance misuse, homelessness and offending).

We do this through standalone learning events, as well as ongoing Communities of Practice - a space where practitioners can come together to share ideas and support each other in implementing practice and system change.

PDU members can also access a range of resources, including tool kits, reports and presentations, with both a local and national focus.

Please join the portal for more information at: www.pdunottingham.org