

Insight



The One East Midlands Magazine

Summer 2011

Issue 7

INSIDE:
Forward Communities Project
Collaborative Working
Lifelong Learning in Rural Communities

Welcome

Thinking differently about lifelong learning

In this time of declining public funding, delivering the best quality and furthest reaching learning provision is essential. Finding the right delivery partnerships will be the key to meeting the needs of our diverse learners and addressing the challenges of the future.

The benefits of collaboration between colleges, community providers and, in many cases, private sector provision, can be of ultimate benefit to:

- each individual provider / organisation
- communities and society
- the economy
- and most importantly the learner

Over the last year One East Midlands has been working closely with VCS learning providers and further education (FE) colleges across the region. This LSIS funded project aims to improve mutual understanding, collaboration and trust between FE colleges, third sector organisations and community based FE providers.

This edition of Insight highlights some of the barriers that block lifelong learning and the benefits of overcoming them. We look at several examples of successful collaboration and the benefits to learners.

I hope it provides food for thought.

Rachel Quinn,
Chief Executive



Social Media

In the past year we have expanded our communications to include a range of social media, providing us with new and exciting ways to engage, collaborate and share information with our members and the wider public.

Since summer 2010:

- We have gained over 280 followers on Twitter;
- Rachel Quinn has blogged on our website on topics including Big Society and inequality in child wellbeing;
- We have posted 23 case studies on our YouTube channel (oneeastmidlands1)

Taking social media further, Regional Voices Live was a new initiative showcasing the collaboration that One East Midlands does with our partners at a national level. At the annual conference in June, the combined expertise of the chief executives of the regional networks resulted in a live discussion on topics suggested from groups across the country.

To get involved in any of our work visit www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk. or get in touch with us by email at information@one-em.org.uk or Twitter at @oneeastmidlands.

Lindsay Boyle,
Communications and Research Co-ordinator

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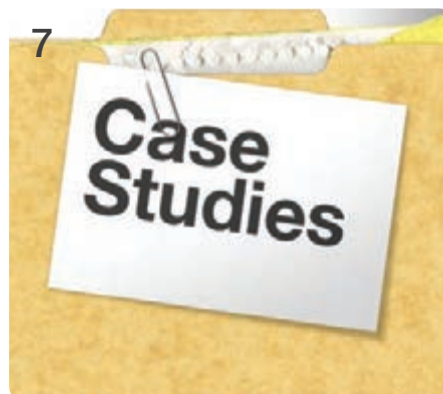
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Forward Communities



The **Forward Communities** Project has been working for the last 13 months on investigating ways to develop opportunities or improving collaborative working between voluntary and community sector, community learning providers and further education (FE) colleges.

Conversations on the current shape of relationships and past and present experiences of partnership working have highlighted the need to take a step back and reconsider what issues need to be addressed to allow for more effective collaboration to take place; with work to be done on all sides to make this happen.

The early indicators from the survey (see page 4), sent out to voluntary and community organisations on collaborative working with FE colleges, also emphasise the need to re-examine the relationships and mechanisms that will allow for more equitable collaboration.

While the East Midlands has its own challenges, some of the issues are not unique to the region. The Third Sector National Learning Alliance's (TSNLA) meeting with John Hayes MP included a discussion on how they can ensure that the FE colleges can work more effectively with third sector organisations. **Forward Communities** has been in discussion with TSNLA about how the work being undertaken here in the East Midlands can feed into this wider national debate.

The **Forward Communities**: cultivating joint working event, on 11th May in Nottingham, demonstrated that there is a willingness to look at ways of more effective collaboration across and between the sectors.

36% of delegates who returned their evaluation form said that following the event they aimed to change the way they work with the other sector.

The event also gave delegates the opportunity to feed into two other areas of work currently being undertaken by the project. For further information about the event visit www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/forwardcommunitiesevent

In collaboration with Open College Network East Midlands Region, work has begun on developing a framework to ensure the successful progression of learners moving between learning environments,

including whether this can be packaged as a means of enabling activities to develop partnerships and thus draw down funding.

The project team is also investigating the potential for a web based toolkit to support collaborative working and partnership building. A roundtable at the event showcased some of the current ideas and asked participants for suggestions for further additions and adaptations.

The project still has six months to run and work continues to investigate opportunities for collaborative working and how we can address the challenges faced for this to take place. We are always looking to identifying those organisations we can work with to assist with moving the findings forward into real actions; making sure that effective interventions are shared with as wide an audience as possible.

The project is looking for examples of how organisations have approached the challenges of working together to deliver lifelong learning and the different interventions they have taken to help this to take place. Anyone with a case study of innovative or imaginative models of collaborative working between the two sectors, can contact Jayne Quantrill, Forward Communities Development Officer at jquantrill@one-em.org.uk or telephone 0115 934 9572

Third Sector views on collaborative working with FE colleges

The first **Forward Communities** survey, sent out to voluntary and community sector organisations in February 2011, was aimed at investigating potential opportunities for collaborative working and the prospect of establishing ongoing relationships between the two sectors.

With such a large and diverse voluntary and community sector in the East Midlands, deciding on which organisations to contact and what approach to take was the first decision to make. It was anticipated that a focused survey, sent out to as many organisations as possible, would prove a jumping off point to start to make those connections, with the opportunity to follow up with more in-depth discussions if appropriate.

While some questions were asked to establish the breadth and reach of the organisations' involvement in providing or delivering training, other questions focused specifically on their relationships with FE colleges.

The survey helped to develop a better understanding of the barriers that exist at local levels from a voluntary and community perspective. The barriers identified by survey respondents can be divided into two categories:

Environmental Barriers

The questionnaire highlighted a number of important environmental factors:

- A lack of trust and understanding between FE colleges and third sector organisations emerged as the most important single barrier;
- There is also still a strong perception that colleges want to take over rather than work in partnership;
- Past experiences of joint working have led the VCS to feel like they are not valued in partnerships.

Organisational Barriers

Organisational barriers can come in many forms, which can undermine attempts at collaboration between organisations or those wishing to engage in collaboration across the sectors.

The questionnaire highlighted a number of important organisational factors:

- Difficulties in identifying who to talk to within the college was identified as the single largest barrier to initiating collaboration;
- Colleges' slow, or in some cases, lack of response also rated highly.

Funding, which straddles both environmental and organisational, also rated highly in the survey.

Potential joint working opportunities

One of the aims of the Forward Communities project is to identify potential joint working opportunities between the two sectors. Respondents were asked in what way they would like to work with FE colleges, with responses ranging from strategic involvement in developing joint service planning through to offering rooms for the delivery of college courses in the community. By far the largest response was being included in some way with the planning of provision and delivery, including:

- Working together to improve community learning opportunities;
- Working in partnership to deliver training or projects to meet identified community needs;
- Working in partnership to identify joint bid writing opportunities and as joint delivery partners;
- And working in partnership to deliver specialist training to meet workforce development needs.

The project intends to take these suggestions forward to see if any of the opportunities already exist within colleges or whether there is the potential for a regional pilot. We are also exploring if there are any similar models of working in other regions.

Forward Communities would like to thank One East Midlands, members of the East Midlands Learning & Skills Partnership and The Mighty Creatives for their help in distributing this survey.

THERE IS STILL TIME TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

If you would like to express views on your relationship with FE colleges and ways you think it could be improved, please get in touch by emailing Jayne Quantrill at jquantrill@one-em.org.uk or by telephone on 0115 934 9572.

Trust, partnerships and a wider vision for colleges

Mark Ravenhall, NIACE



The Colleges in their Communities Inquiry reflects an important shift in the way in which colleges and their wider role are perceived, both in government and within further education itself.

The Inquiry was set up just as large learning providers, like colleges, were given new freedoms while smaller organisations, often in the third sector, were denied a direct contract with the Skills Funding Agency. The Inquiry's partners acknowledge that a wider vision of the role of colleges is needed if they are to meet community need.

Further education has a number of passionate advocates within government, not least in Business Secretary, Vince Cable and the Minister of State for Further Education and Skills, John Hayes. Their desire to enable colleges to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of employers, learners and their community was a key prompt for the inquiry.

The Inquiry will launch its findings at the Association of Colleges annual conference in November 2011. While it's too early to go into any detail about its recommendations, a few key themes have emerged through the process of consultation and debate, which I will briefly develop here.

The first is **partnership**. We recognise that genuine collaboration is essential not only in responding to tightening fiscal circumstances, but in delivering the best possible service to learners, employers and communities. There are plenty of examples of this taking place in communities and colleges around the country.

The best of them know that this requires working closely with key partners in the voluntary and community sector, local government, business, the health sector, schools and higher education, and informal adult and community learning. By carefully planning provision in the interests of the whole community we stand not only to extend the reach of learning provision but to begin to build a genuine culture of learning in those communities.

The second key theme to emerge is that of **trust**. Delivering this vision demands a change in culture, not only within colleges, but across communities. Trust, founded on a shared understanding of aims and objectives, will be essential. It implies a willingness to listen, be flexible and view engagement as a continuum of activity differentiated by need, geography and interest. The government has put three basic principles at the heart of its strategy:

- Fairness: prioritising funding for those least able to help themselves;
- Responsibility: sharing investment between state, individual and employer; and

- Freedom: trusting professionals to do their job and be accountable to the people they serve.

It is hoped that they are not lost in the often murky transition from policy vision to implementation and delivery.

The third and final strand is the wider **social purpose** of learning. At NIACE, we take the view that learning is much more than gaining qualifications or contributing to economic growth, important though those things are. As NIACE Chief Executive, Alan Tuckett has argued, the wider economic, social and environmental challenges facing Britain in the years ahead all point clearly to the need for a culture of lifelong learning. It's time we realised that potential.

Mark Ravenhall is NIACE's Director responsible for further and higher education, and local government

GET INVOLVED

We would like to know your thoughts and suggestions on how FE colleges can work more effectively with third sector organisations to ensure

- genuine collaboration
- planning provision is in the interests of the whole community.

Please contact Jayne Quantrill at the Forward Communities project at jquantrill@one-em.org.uk

Supporting learning and skills in difficult times

Third Sector Strategic Dialogues

John Harris, TSNLA

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has been working with the Third Sector Learning Alliance (TSNLA) to develop participation in a series of “strategic dialogues” with adult learning providers and leaders. The purpose of this dialogue is to analyse and address the challenges we face across the FE and skills sector.

This series of dialogues aims to:

- provide facilitated opportunities for groups of similar providers to talk through and share their analysis of the strategic challenges they face;
- capture and share the approaches being taken to addressing these challenges;
- provide an initial analysis of the issues faced and the strategic options and their consequences; and
- capture the implications for LSIS services including research.



TSNLA will be holding two strategic dialogues on the mornings of the 23rd September (Birmingham) and the 18th November (London). The dialogue in September will be third sector only whilst the dialogue in November will include representatives from BIS, Skills Funding Agency and YPLA.

As part of this work we will also be capturing the perspectives of third sector leaders and providers through podcasts and vodcasts.

WHAT KIND OF ISSUES WILL BE EXPLORED?

This is up to our members - so far some issues have been highlighted e.g. the nature of the relationship between the third sector and government and its department for skills and lifelong learning, the impact of minimum contract levels on provision to young people or in rural areas. In a time of reduced funding and the need for innovation and creativity, one area identified for exploration is that of ‘learning

co-operatives’ and another is that of developing collaboration between FE colleges and the third sector. This is being explored within the context of the LSIS report ‘The FE and Skills Sector in 2020: a social productivity approach’ and the future shape and direction of informal adult and community learning.

To register your interest in the policy dialogues email john.harris@tsnla.org.uk

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was formed to accelerate quality improvement, increase participation and raise standards and achievement in the learning and skills sector in England.

For more information on LSIS and its work visit www.lsis.org.uk.

Perspectives on wor

Reap what you sow with Leicester College

In December 2009, as part of the Government's Transformation Fund for informal adult learning (www.transformationfund.org.uk), a partnership project between Leicester College and the Aylestone Allotment & Leisure Gardeners Society was set up to show people how to beat the credit crunch by growing their own produce.

The **sow it: grow it: eat it** project aimed to teach local residents how to grow their own fruit and vegetables using a polytunnel and a plot of land on an allotment site in Leicester. It also introduced them to the concepts of sustainability and environmental awareness, including practical recycling such as growing strawberries in old Wellington boots. The project also encouraged healthy eating and the society provided a room in their clubhouse, where the participants learnt how to prepare and cook their produce.

Society Chairman, Jim Clarke, who worked with the project said "as well as giving the opportunity to lots of people to try growing their own food it also showed them how nice things taste when things are home grown; people could taste the difference."

The same amount of seeds and plants were also given to the new "eco-learners" to plant at home, replicating what they have learnt on the allotment, with the green fingered residents encouraged to

continue to meet and support each other after the life of the project.

Caz Bell, Programme Area Manager for Community Partnerships at Leicester College said: "Through the 'Sow it: Grow it; Eat it' project, the aim was to enthuse people about the idea of growing their own produce and show them the rewards to their well-being as well as on their pockets in doing so. It was a great opportunity to take part in a fun activity whilst learning how to be more economically sustainable."

Leicester College and the Employer Engagement and Partnership team (EEPA) hold regular meetings with business and community and voluntary partners to update them on current issues and continually seek opportunities to work together to expand the range of training on offer and assist with project delivery.

To find out about EEPA and all of Leicester College's training call 0116 224 2240.



Derby Adult Learning Service: Learning Partners Scheme

The Derby Adult Learning Service: Learning Partners Scheme was set up in 1989 to give people with additional needs greater access to the wide range of learning opportunities across Derby. It links volunteers with people who would like to go to an adult learning class but can't or don't have the confidence to do this alone.

The aim of the scheme is to provide appropriate learning support for the learner; this may be practical, emotional or physical, thus promoting independence to enable them to partake in classes of their choice. Volunteers attend classes alongside their partner, offering support, though they both take the course as learners.

Gavin was a learner on a craft course and the tutor realised that Gavin would gain more from the course if he had a small amount of extra help to complete some of the tasks. Linda was a learner attending the same craft course who having seen other learning partners working together decided that this was something that she would like to do.

As often happens in the scheme, Gavin and Linda developed a good relationship and attended a number of craft classes throughout the year.

Working in partnership



This last term Gavin has made a mosaic table top (*pictured*). Gavin says that Linda has given him the confidence to tackle a bigger project than he would have done without her support. Linda has helped Gavin with various practical tasks, as well as using her knowledge of design and colour to support Gavin to make his own creative decisions.

Linda feels that the most important part of her support is not to impose too many of her own ideas and ways of working on Gavin but to give him support to enable him to do his own work in his own way. Both Gavin and Linda say that the key to their successful partnership is respecting each other.

Gavin says that the Learning Partners Scheme has "Helped me to achieve things I would not be able to do on my own and to make new friends."

To become a Learning Partner or find out more please contact:
Debbie Owen Tel: (01332) 711375
email: debbie.owen@derbyals.org



South Notts College Computer Maintenance Course



South Nottingham College

Between September 2009 and July 2010 South Nottingham College worked in partnership with ELUSE (Express Link-Up Social Enterprise), to deliver the City and Guilds 7266 Certificate in Systems Support PC Maintenance and to raise the literacy and numeracy skills of the course participants to enable them to function successfully in the workplace.

ELUSE ICT repair and recycling centre, provided the students with excellent facilities for working on a range of ICT equipment including PCs, laptop computers and printers, as well as a large room suitable for teaching purposes.

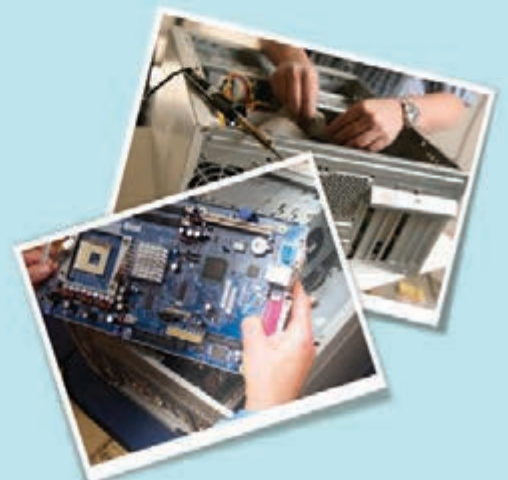
The course ran over 34 weeks with learners attending the ELUSE learning centre six hours a day, three days a week. Each day was split into ICT maintenance, Skills for Life or social skills sessions. A very popular opportunity during the course was for learners to build and keep their own computer.

All ICT maintenance skills were taught by a technician employed by ELUSE with Skills for Life delivered by a specialist tutor from South Nottingham College who managed the C&G qualification and delivered sessions on confidence building, health and safety, job search and interview techniques.

Overall the course was successful with all learners gaining the C&G qualification and at least one or both of the skills for life qualifications.

Following on from the closure of ELUSE and keen to see if this model of collaborative working could be replicated, the idea was successfully transferred to a similar partnership with Bestwood Directions. Between September 2010 – June 2011, participants learned a wide range of skills, including software installation, fault finding etc, to enable them to maintain their own PCs while working towards the City and Guilds 7266 Certificate in Systems Support PC Maintenance; delivered by the former ELUSE technician, working alongside a Skills for Life specialist from the college.

If you would like to discuss working with the college please contact Dave Buckley, Head of School - Lifelong Learning, South Nottingham College
Tel: 0115 9146287



Lifelong Learning and Rural Communities

Summary of the report by Anne O'Grady of NIACE for the Derbyshire Learning and Development Consortium

Rural communities in England are changing. This transformation is typified by inward migration from urban and new communities (especially European migrant communities) and outbound migration by young people and adults seeking employment or lower housing costs. As a result rural populations are ageing faster than their urban counterparts.

Research into the barriers to lifelong learning has identified that rural learners are disadvantaged because the small population numbers tend to mask 'deprivation' indices favouring urban populations. Effective transport infrastructure is also crucial, as is the need to ensure that provision is flexible enough to enable learner participation. This will include a mix of accessible, flexible learning programmes and a diverse range of delivery options utilising a range of technologies, such as e-learning and distance learning. Seasonality in particular is of relevance to both the agricultural and tourism industries.

Recent changes to the way learning and skills is funded, and the introduction of larger contract values, will add to the challenges for learners in Rural Communities. Learning in the heart of our communities is often delivered by very small organisations, working through VCS infrastructure or consortia arrangements. These organisations achieve significant returns on social investment and economies of scale by delivering learning in tandem with other services, combining learning with community development, support and volunteering. Funding directed towards this

provision represents a very small part of the budget for Adult Skills, but it is an essential part of ensuring our rural communities are able to develop and thrive.

Third sector organisations often proliferate in rural areas due to the lack of public services and generally have the deepest reach into individual neighbourhoods or particular groups of actual or prospective learners; therefore they have a crucial role to play in widening participation and encouraging motivation. The third sector is also well positioned to offer an informed voice on the challenges faced by members of rural communities within their locality in accessing learning opportunities, and particularly progression opportunities.

The character of rural Britain is changing and with this comes a demand for an alternative curriculum offer that reflects the large number of older learners and the lifelong learning needs of a new international workforce. Technology can play a part but it is not realistic or desirable for virtual learning to fully substitute face-to-face contact. The lack of recognition of the greater costs of delivering programmes in rural areas, linked to more sparse populations



may put future delivery at risk. In order to maximise these opportunities and minimise the risks, it is important that the third sector works closely with other stakeholders to develop a strategy for rural learning.

This can be achieved by:

- Active engagement in local learning networks
- Active engagement of communities and the offer of robust information, advice and guidance services
- Supporting local communities to shape their own learning programmes
- Integrating learning into the wider offer of services for older adults.

If you would like to give your views and comments please visit www.rurallearner.org.uk.

LEARNING COMMUNITY



“The Learning Community aims to confront and help alleviate the local issues that people encounter, which impedes their potential for personal progression; whether that be further education, employment or simply confidence and self esteem building that provide that ‘first step’ to learning”

Lorraine Palmer, Project Manager

Initiated by Government Office East Midlands (GOEM) back in 2005, the Learning Community project in Lincolnshire seeks to bring the community together, providing residents with information and local access to services. However, it recognises that there are often other issues that must be addressed before people are able to return to work, such as debt or housing issues, and so it engages with a wide range of strategic and local partners.

In Lincoln, the project initially launched in Birchwood with the Birchwood Access and Training Centre, acts as the hub for Learning Community activity.

What do they offer?

- A one stop-shop for community advice, information and guidance
- Support and advice to those seeking information and or signposting
- Access to specialist advisers including counsellors, CAB, Sure Start, police, credit union, money advice services, self employment services and the City of Lincoln Council Health Team
- Excellent links with Job Centre Plus for referral and a local champion for advice
- Training including IAG, Basic Skills from Entry Level to Level 2, IT Courses from BBC Click, UK Online and ECDL Advanced
- A variety of courses through PCDL and NLDC delivery
- A work club with a roll on programme of eight weeks duration.



The Centre now supports a large number of local volunteers within Birchwood's 94 community groups providing lunch clubs, community larders, parent led groups in the children's centre, art and craft and even a choir.

Following its success the project has expanded to 20 Learning Community Hubs throughout Lincolnshire, all led by independent learning delivery organisations, small charities or social enterprises. The services offered may vary but are all community driven and, by aligning activity with other partners, achieve value added services.

ITS NOT ROCKET SCIENCE – IT'S ACTUALLY MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT!

Lorraine Palmer, Project Manager of Learning Communities offers the following advice:

- Stick to what you are good at and use others for support
- Know what's going on in your area
- Develop a community forum
- Hold regular strategic partner meetings to share knowledge of new projects and initiatives to support your community.

And remember:

- Communities don't see their issues in the same way as public service organisations do
- One size doesn't fit all!
- Local problems need local solutions
- Engagement takes trust and trust takes time.

“For rural communities in particular it is important to have access to a network of professionals and the Learning Communities Project provides a means to reduce isolation”

Barbara Clarke, Wolds Learning Network

For further information email lorraine-palmer@btconnect.com.



**Learning
Community**

SPOTLIGHT

Member: NAVO



1. What does NAVO do?

NAVO was established 20 years ago to enhance working between voluntary and public sector organisations across Nottinghamshire. Through existing networks we provide information, legislative updates, training, communications and opportunities for involvement, knowing that the sector can only make informed decisions if they are kept up to date and are genuinely involved in decision making.

All this means that NAVO now has a broad understanding of the issues being experienced throughout the varied and diverse communities of Nottinghamshire. NAVO uses this knowledge to represent the voluntary sector on a range of Nottinghamshire County Council boards.

NAVO networks, particularly our Older People's and Families, Children and Young People's Forums are recognised by voluntary and statutory partners as a reliable and appropriate conduit for sharing valued information, good practice, legislative updates and training opportunities.

2. What benefits of membership to One EM do you see?

Membership of One EM gives NAVO access to up-to-date information on news, events and policy changes. It also offers us the opportunity to further develop through lateral and vertical integration.

Lateral integration involves closer networking with organisations outside Nottinghamshire that perform similar functions in other parts of the region.

Vertical integration involves the opportunity to feedback experiences into the regional structure and through that to national decision makers, as well as receiving timely input on policies and developments which could be cascaded to benefit our own members and networks.

3. How has the economic downturn encouraged collaborative working?

During 2010 it became apparent that funding environments were going to change and so NAVO undertook a full financial review in order to understand where savings and efficiencies could be made. Whilst each element of expenditure was scrutinised, the organisation also actively looked for opportunities to collaborate, not just to reduce spending but also to add support and sustainability to other voluntary organisations where possible.

Cross sector collaboration has always been a priority for NAVO and our reputation for jointly hosting events and delivering consultation work across the Nottinghamshire Partnership is recognised.

The economic downturn and the public sector cuts, whilst having a devastating effect on the sector, have also encouraged - and made even more necessary - collaboration within the voluntary and community sector itself. In Nottinghamshire, a fresh approach has been adopted for sharing information and communicating with other groups.

Working in collaboration with the South Nottinghamshire Alliance of CVSs, NAVO is creating a more efficient and effective system for sharing news and information around vacancies, funding, training and events. All information will be collated centrally by NAVO and circulated across the county, aiming to remove duplication and provide best value from limited resources.

For voluntary groups in Nottinghamshire this approach is ground breaking, harnessing, as it does the benefits of communications technology and collaboration to provide a fast, up-to-date and inclusive service.

For more information visit www.navo.org.uk.

SPOTLIGHT

Trustee: Dawn Wale



1. How did you get involved in One East Midlands?

I got involved with One EM through the work I do with East Midlands Funding Advice Network (EMFAN). My job involves coordinating a funding advice network for Nottinghamshire and training funding advisors. This feeds into EMFAN, so we work closely together. I joined the board in November 2010, to have the opportunity to get involved in other areas of One EM's work.

2. What role do you have within the Board?

I was co-opted to the board to fill a risk management specialism, which over time may involve looking at a variety of areas, from financial risk to reputational risk. My background working in fundraising also means that funding is a key area for me within the board. However, as a board member it's expected that I contribute to all discussions, covering a variety of topics including helping plan our future direction – these discussions can be especially poignant in the current climate facing the voluntary sector.

3. What skills do you bring to this role?

My background is largely in fundraising and risk management, which means these are the specialisms that I bring to the board. Both topics are particularly prominent when examining our current work and planning our future work. Within fundraising, I've spent a lot of time supporting partnership bids and bringing together different organisations who want to work together, which supports the ethos of One EM as a collaborative voice for the voluntary sector.

In addition, there are some practical aspects I bring to the role: I've spent a lot of time doing outreach work with under-represented and hard to reach groups and understand the issues that they're facing. My current work, training voluntary sector groups, keeps me in touch with the skills that voluntary groups have and what they're asking to know more about in the future, including topics like personalisation, and social return on investment.

4. What do you see are the benefits of One EM and how can it support the VCS in the region?

It's important that there's a mechanism for bringing local views to the national policy arena, and a way of bringing the complexities of national policy back to local organisations in a way that is meaningful for them and their work. One EM, through its contact with the sector, is ideally placed for bringing people in the sector together to share views and work together.

5. What areas of work would you like One EM to focus on?

With the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), I'd like to see One EM working with them to ensure that people are ready for the partnerships, and that LEPs use One EM as a mechanism for feeding into the national arena. Doing this will help us support the sector to build better relationships with the private as well as the public sector. I'd also like to see us working on relationships within the sector, encouraging groups to buy and sell services, knowledge and expertise from each other in order to mutually boost our growth as a sector.

6. What advice can you share on collaborative working?

My tips for collaborative working on funding bids are:

- 1) Think about why you want to collaborate, and what you want to get out of it – it should be driven by a need to do so, rather than external forces demanding it.
- 2) Seek out partners that have been recommended by colleagues and peers, in order that you know their reliability.
- 3) Ensure you have a clear and transparent system for allocating funds to partners, and that you are clear if the partnership is for one specific piece of work, or ongoing.
- 4) Make sure each partner has a defined role and knows what they are responsible for doing.
- 5) Ensure there is a two way process of communication, rather than all decisions being made by the lead partner.

Report b

The Big Event



With localism and the Big Society being the fundamental principles on which the coalition government rests its vision for communities, The Big Event, attended by 140 delegates in Leicester on 1 March, examined the crucial relationship between the VCS and the public sector at this time.

Delivered in partnership between One East Midlands and East Midlands Councils, and supported by the Big Lottery Fund and the East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, the overall aim of the event was to understand how the two sectors could work together to deliver the Government's goals.

The event was opened by One East Midlands Chief Executive, Rachel Quinn, who summarised the current relationship between the sectors and outlined the basic principles of the Big Society that impact on the relationship, including:

- Giving communities more power
- Encouraging people to take an active role in their communities
- Transferring power from central to local government
- Supporting cooperatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises
- Publishing government data.

Delegates from both sectors (broken down into approximately 63% VCS and 27% public sector) were addressed from both sides of the coin on the future of their relationships, with Cllr David Parsons CBE, Leader of Leicestershire County Council and Chair of East Midlands Council, speaking on the impact of the Big Society on local governments, community empowerment and the opening up of public services.

Through his modern day fairy story of *"The Giant Gloomins Vs. The Big Society"*, Nick Beddow, Chief Executive of CDX, a national independent membership organisation for community development, provided a VCS viewpoint, outlining ideas for how communities can successfully develop and evolve within the Big Society.

In addition to sessions on TUPE regulations from Cheryl Pidgeon, Regional Secretary of the Midlands TUC, and Equalities Duties and funding decisions from Kelly Jussab, REDP, delegates attended two of a range of workshops examining key issues overlapping between and led by representatives from both sectors. These workshops included:

- **Intelligent Commissioning** – focused on the challenges and opportunities of achieving good procurement and contracting processes and how risks and managements can be managed effectively. The workshop drew on the experience of the Derbyshire Contracts Advice Network.
- **Supporting Civil Society** – examined what support services and infrastructure VCS organisations need, how they are best provided and at what scale.
- **Health Communities** – focused on the proposed changes to public health, their potential impact on communities and the role the VCS has to play in their agenda.
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships** – taught more about LEPs, their structure, role and future delivery objectives.
- **Community Assets** – examined the role of asset transfer in building stronger communities and safeguarding civic assets, including an update on the Localism Bill.
- **Local Funds for Local Needs** – examined how strategic coordination and targeting of resources can ensure local needs are met and gaps in provision avoided.
- **Community Engagement in Planning** – examined proposed reforms of the planning system, current practice and how to enable increased engagement.

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- Both sectors need to understand and acknowledge how each other works in order to improve, compromise and adapt when working together.
- The VCS needs to demonstrate what they can achieve – remembering that they have a right to exist but not necessarily a right to public money.
- Methods need to be put in place to allow the sectors to engage with national bodies.

The full post-event final report, presentations and other resources are available online at www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/bigevent

For further information on East Midlands Councils visit www.emcouncils.gov.uk, the Big Lottery Fund visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk and East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership visit www.eastmidlandsiep.gov.uk.

Since the Big Event took place in March, Cabinet Office has set up a small local intelligence team to provide local insight and share intelligence on the practical implications of the Big Society reforms. These representatives will provide background and context on flagship programmes and help identify and promote successful local examples.

For further information contact Alison Adams, Local Intelligence Team Manager for the East Midlands on 0115 971 4722, 07818 494958 or email Alison.adams@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk.

Following the event, Rachel Quinn said: “The Big Event brought together some of the best examples of public and voluntary sector partnership and paved the way for better relationships in the future. As ‘localism fever’ takes hold, communities, the VCS and the public sector must use every opportunity to learn how to work together better and more efficiently in the interests of a fairer and more prosperous society.”

Key findings from discussions and workshops on the day included that:

- The relationship between the two sectors is key to the success of Localism and the Big Society.
- Both sectors need to inspire the public to change and get involved.
- The VCS needs to be creative in how it adapts to funding changes in the current economic climate.
- The sectors need to work together to share existing resources and information, and to improve competition.



One East Midlands is a registered charity, working with the voluntary and community sector.

One East Midlands brings together organisations that support voluntary and community groups across the region to influence and shape policy, improve services and provide a single point of contact for all stakeholders at a regional and national level.

One East Midlands is accountable to its members: voluntary and community organisations, frontline groups, public and private sector agencies. Through its membership, the sector is able to influence One East Midlands' work and ensure that the organisation does what it sets out to do.

For more information on our membership scheme visit the website: **www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk**

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