

Case study

Voice for the VCS Project

The Voice for the VCS Project, supported by Big Lottery, aims to build the capacity of frontline third sector organisations to participate effectively in Local Strategic Partnerships and the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

It does this by:

- Providing free training opportunities to raise awareness of the LAA and the benefits of being more involved.
- Coordinating county wide VCS forums to create a space for two way dialogue between sectors.
- Managing VCS communication mechanisms around the LAA by keeping a website up to date and producing a bi-monthly bulletin.
- Advocating on behalf of the sector to raise awareness of the VCS contribution to representational partnerships.

The project is supported by 3D, the third sector infrastructure consortium for Derbyshire, which brings together third sector support agencies from across the county.

Supporting Voices

As the Project Officer, Claire Thornber delivers 'Voice for the VCS' with the support of 3D. She works with and on behalf of Derbyshire's infrastructure agencies, providing them with a resource for their members to access. Part of her role involves working with frontline organisations, one-by-one, to give them a greater understanding of the LAA and help them identify how their work contributes both directly and indirectly to the National Indicators. This enables them to better demonstrate the added value they provide.

Claire recently led a session at the Amber Trust's management and staff away day. This helped them to understand not only how their various activities deliver against some of Derbyshire's top priorities, but also why it is so important to be able to evidence how they support delivery. Claire was able to help them understand that while NI 142 (vulnerable people are supported to maintain independent living) was their 'bread and butter', they supported delivery of a further six different indicators, making a massive contribution to the work of the Derbyshire Partnership Forum.

National Indicators (NI)

These are performance indicators set by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Each Local Area Agreement (LAA) has up to 35 National

Indicators, plus 17 statutory education/early years targets. A local strategic partnership (LSP) can add further local indicators, either from the national set or devised locally to reflect current local circumstances. VCS activity has an impact on many of the NIs, but of particular relevance to the sector are NI 6 to increase 'participation in regular volunteering' and NI 7 to improve the 'environment for a thriving third sector'.

Working in partnership

Voice coordinated an event to enable frontline organisations to talk directly to local strategic decision makers about what contributes to a thriving third sector. Approximately 50 VCS representatives met with Derbyshire Partnership Forum's Culture Board, which has the responsibility for delivering against NI 7. After much discussion, a working group met and developed an action plan incorporating all the comments from the event. This was then taken back to the VCS for consultation and has since been approved by the Culture Board. A steering group made up of third and public sector partners will now take the plan forward and report back to 'the frontline' via the Voice for the VCS Project.

"The Voice for the VCS Project is about increasing understanding of Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships amongst frontline community groups – how they relate to the VCS and how the VCS relate to them." Claire Thornber, Voice for the VCS Project Officer

"The consortium works well – people come together to work in partnership for the benefit of frontline organisations." Kerrie Fletcher, Manager, Third Sector Support for Derbyshire (3D)

For further information visit www.derbyshirercc.org.uk