



Voluntary Sector Engagement in Community Planning

Conference Report

June 2006



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CHP	Community Health Partnership
CLOG	Closing the Opportunity Gap
CP	Community Planning
CCF	Community Care Forum
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
HELPP	Healthy Living Partnership Project
HIP	Health Improvement Partnership
MC	Midlothian Council
MVA	Midlothian Voluntary Action
NHS	National Health Service
SIF	Social Inclusion Forum
SIP	Social Inclusion Partnership
VSF	Voluntary Sector Forum

Voluntary Sector Engagement in Community Planning Conference Report

1.0 Purpose of the Report

This document reports the outcomes of an event examining voluntary sector engagement in community planning in Midlothian.

2.0 The Conference

The Conference took place on Thursday 22 June at Loanhead Miner's Welfare. 51 delegates attended the day, representing 30 organisations. A full delegates list can be found in Appendix A.

The purpose of this event was to identify methods of enhancing the representation of the voluntary sector in community planning partnerships and forums, and improve feedback mechanisms to the wider voluntary sector. There was also an opportunity to discuss voluntary sector representation on Community Health Partnerships.

This event was organised by Midlothian Voluntary Action, in partnership with Midlothian Council Community Learning and Development, with funding from The Scottish Executive.

The day featured three presentations:

Overview of Community Planning Structures in Midlothian
Jess Collins, Senior Policy Officer, Midlothian Council

The Voluntary Sector Compact,
Alasdair Mathers, Regeneration and Social Policy Manager, Midlothian Council

Good Practice in Representation
Bill Weir, Partnership Development Officer, Voluntary Health Scotland



Jess Collins, Midlothian Council

These were followed by thematic workshops on:

- Health and Inequalities
- Children and Child Protection
- Social Inclusion Partnership
- Community Care
- Governance and Organisational Development

MVA's Information Officer, with the assistance of Strategic Services, drafted Structure Diagrams for the three Community Planning themes, which outlined the main partnerships of which MVA were aware. Several delegates commented on how essential these documents were.

The publicity and programme for the day can be found in Appendix B.

3.0 The Outcomes of the Day

3.1 The outcomes we worked toward on the day were:

- The voluntary sector will have a better understanding of community planning structures and processes in Midlothian;
- Gaps in voluntary sector representation in community planning structures will be identified;
- Agreement on the most appropriate voluntary sector representatives on community planning structures will be reached;
- Methods of disseminating information on community planning by voluntary sector reps to the wider voluntary sector are agreed.

This section looks at the issues raised against each of these outcomes on the day, drawing on the facilitated discussions in the workshops. More detailed notes from the workshop are to be found in Appendix C.

3.2 Voluntary Sector Understanding Of Community Planning Structures And Processes In Midlothian

There was a wide variance in the awareness of group members of the community planning structures. For example, in the Social Inclusion Partnership workshop, some members were very actively involved and regularly attended Social Inclusion Forum meetings, while other members were unaware of either the SIP or the SIF.

The complexity of the community planning structures was noted by the Community Care workshop, and a distinction was made between awareness of the structures, and actually feeling that their views were heard.

The Health and Inequalities Workshop raised the issue of the diversity of work in the voluntary sector making it almost impossible for one individual to represent the views of the organisations that make up the local sector.

3.3 Gaps In Voluntary Sector Representation In Community Planning Structures

A number of weaknesses in the current structures were identified:

Representation

- The need to make sure that representation is real, and not just 'ticked off';
- Not enough representation of problems in deprived areas;
- There is a problem when the bulk of those in a partnership were from one sector, e.g. NHS or Council, and only two or three were from the voluntary sector or public - imbalance in power;
- Conflicting views are not well accommodated.



Community Care Workshop

Information and Knowledge

- Lack of knowledge of the voluntary sector forum and other ways of feeding into the process;
- It was thought that the Council did not recognise that charities were also businesses - this could be an issue for the Compact;
- Group members did not know the remit of all the CPP groups or who is in them - need better information;
- Voluntary sector may not be aware of all the changes in services etc, yet this knowledge might impact on how they develop or plan their own service;
- Need to identify gaps in service - who is missing?
- Knowing who to contact to get the right information;
- Room for improvement with all sharing accurate user-friendly information;
- Again accuracy of information- changes in legislation/organisational policies, there are grey area which cause uncertainty, knowing who is responsible.

Theme specific

Child Protection

- There is a real gap with children's services not being a specific issue on the voluntary sector forum;
- Weaknesses within the children's service boards, where are we placed and who is representing?
- Children's Service Planning- How to get the right people involved?
- How to ensure the wider complexities of child protection are understood by all and how to link all that this involves.

SIP

- In the SIP workshop, it was noted that the Closing the Opportunity Gap targets did not mention disability, which could be a problem as these were the targets the SIP responds to.

3.4 The Most Appropriate Voluntary Sector Representatives On Community Planning Structures

It was noted that there are a number of representative structures in place that already work well, such as the Voluntary Sector Forum and the Community Council network. One group made the plea:

"Don't add structures or make them more complicated - use existing mechanisms for representation"

However, a number of suggestions for improvement were made:

Awareness Raising of Structures and Partners

- Raise awareness among organisations/ service users about community planning structures (diagrams, publicity) and how they can have a voice in the process;
- Create a 'who's who' guide to community planning partners in Midlothian;
- Awareness raising: what other groups exist, educating and informing all

concerned.

Improve relationships between partners

- Improve 'horizontal' relationships between partners;
- 'Speed networking' sessions so people can meet each other;
- Bring together views of community and smaller groups;
- Would like to see relationships built up between sectors so that organisations can approach relevant people directly;
- Need to bridge the gap between voluntary sector and statutory services;
- Communication is key - voluntary organisations need to form/meet, this would allow the sharing of information and experiences, raise awareness and help build alliances;
- Voluntary sector representation and how it engages with structures/partnerships and each other.

Information

- A dedicated resource/worker to disseminate information and facilitate communication;
- The sharing of best practice regards to using appropriate methods of communication, bearing in mind confidentiality, child safety etc;
- Subgroup would need supplemented perhaps through email, e-forum. Worthwhile to look at MVA's model of e-briefings;
- Issues around confidentiality need to be considered when sharing information (looking at this through work on the 'Integrated Framework');
- The responsibility is also on us to pass information on to each other;
- Co-ordinating information & ensuring accuracy;
- A network or central point for obtaining & sharing information would be useful;
- Lead from child protection committee to disseminate policy clearly would offer some support to organisations grappling with some issues. This would be a two way process as organisations need to raise issues and take responsibility.

Voluntary Sector Forum

- Develop the Voluntary Sector Forum as a more forceful body;
- Increase awareness of the Voluntary Sector Forum and its role feeding into the CHP and community planning process;
- Not every issues could be taken to the VSF, but that contacts could be made there and representation made through these contacts;
- Development of a Children's Services Sub-group within or representing the voluntary sector forum.

Theme specific

SIP

- It was thought it would be useful to have a third voluntary sector representative on the SIP, particularly someone with an understanding of disability issues;
- The SIP should look at the needs of disabled people and migrant workers, in addition to the CLOG targets.

Community Care

- Community Care 'chat room' / e-forum.

Health and inequalities

- Views could feed directly through members of the Joint Health Improvement Team;
- Views could feed in through members of the Health Improvement Partnership and its various sub-groups;
- Views could feed through HELPP;
- There needs to be wider recognition throughout the community planning structures that health improvement and health inequalities are all pervasive and key in all areas.

Child Protection

- There is a voluntary sector forum but children's services/child protection is not specifically represented/discussed on this. Subgroup is needed or perhaps a compact within children's organisations this would include voluntary & public/statutory bodies/services;
- All sub-committees that were of interest to the group could circulate agenda/minutes so people could know in advance whether any issues would be relevant for them;
- Might be worth having an event for further discussion and to progress with the development of a voluntary sector children services sub-committee'; (Who would co-ordinate the work of the children services sub-committee and to agree representation on the child protection committee/sub committees);
- Representation on the Child Protection Committee should be by a child care organisations. Need to develop a 'Practice Subgroup' under 'Child Protection', wide cross sector representation would be required.

3.5 Disseminating Information On Community Planning

It was thought that conferences like today's were a very useful way of getting information across and getting feedback. As with representation, it was noted that there are a lot of existing channels for informing the voluntary sector, including:

- The Community Conference;
- The MVA newsletter (although you have to sign up for it, and read it!);
- MVA briefings;
- Community Council network;
- Individual voluntary organisations' newsletters.

However, it was noted that there are so many consultations that individuals can suffer 'survey fatigue'.

The compact needs to have some kind of consultation strategy spelled out. As a starting point, consultations need to be well advertised and accessible to the 'layman'.

More information is required from the Council on contracts and service level agreements. It was noted that the Council now has a Procurement Officer.



Health and Inequalities Workshop

3.6 Governance

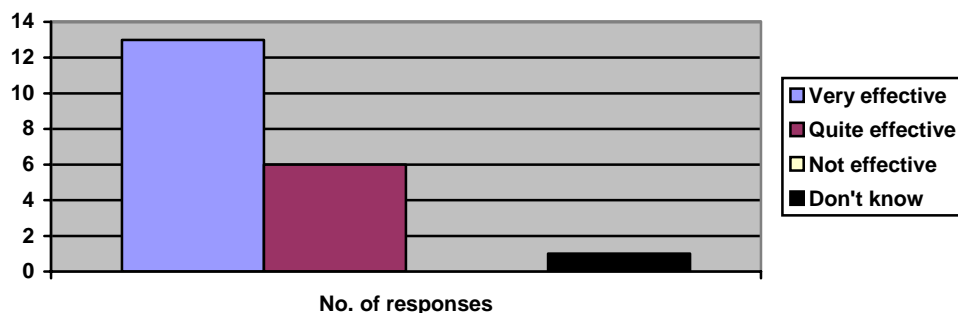
The fifth workshop had a slightly different format from the others, and focussed on issues of governance with relation to the representativeness of voluntary organisations. The key issues coming out of the workshop were:

- In the workshop there was a variety of organisations, some of whom had Board members who were there as individuals, as some had representatives of other organisations on their Board;
- The difficulties of recruiting voluntary management committee members were noted. This is exacerbated by individual's unwillingness to be on a Company Board, as opposed to a committee, and the enhanced regulation of charities' committee members by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator;
- The difficulties of managing user representation on the Board were noted, and all the organisations went to some length to solicit feedback from their users.

4.0 MVA's Representation of the Voluntary Sector in Community Planning

A short questionnaire was distributed on the day, inviting delegates to give their opinion regarding how well MVA represents their interests in the community planning process. 20 responses were received.

Delegates were asked 'How effective do you think MVA is at representing the views of the voluntary sector in the community planning process?'



Respondents were positive about MVA's impact:

"Most of the information I receive is from MVA. They are very effective at passing on information about the voluntary sector."

"Helpful if voluntary sector recognized the importance of MVA's position and improved level of participation e.g. through Voluntary Sector Forum."

"Today was the start for me in this area. I would now like to get more involved in the C.P. process in Midlothian and feel confident the MVA will be able to provide the information to do this at the level best for my organization."

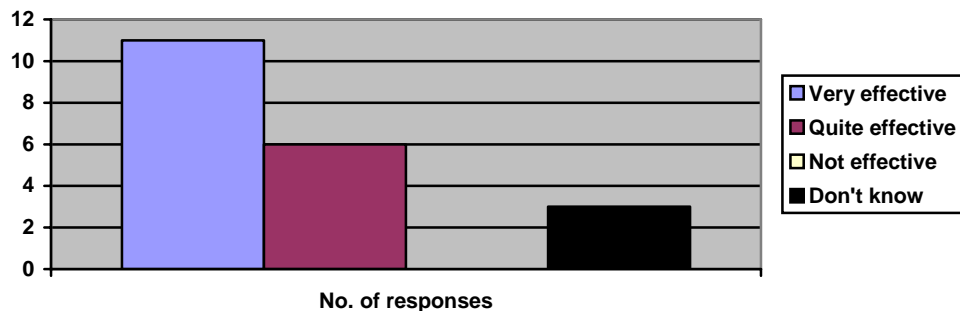
One negative response was received:

"Not aware/informed about MVA's representing voluntary sector - have not been asked for any views or opinions about any issues."

Suggestions for improvement were:

- More surveying of user groups
- Continuing to involve services, service users in planning
- Getting feedback at various forums

Delegates were asked 'How effective do you think MVA is at feeding back information from community planning meetings to the voluntary sector?'



Two comments were given:

"As above (1st) - depends on Voluntary sector's willingness to participate."

"Perhaps I have not made myself aware of any feedback. Do read MVA newsletter, which is very good. Haven't seen 'Midlothian Moving Forward Document'."

Suggestions for improvement were:

- More of this.
- More workshops & joint training such as today's event.
- Communications in various ways. Also to add to forum agendas.
- Find ways to impart the work of the voluntary sector to the general public - in a way the layperson understands.

5.0 Addressing the Issues Raised

Issue	Action	By whom
Improving voluntary sector information on Community Planning	Develop and finalise draft structure diagrams produced for the event.	MVA/BPU
	Produce document with information on CP partners and the remit of all partnership groups for distribution to the voluntary sector.	BPU
	Produce Community Planning briefing.	MVA
	Improve individual staff awareness of community planning structures by incorporating them into a Model Induction Pack.	MVA
Improving relationships between community planning partners.	Relationship between voluntary sector and Midlothian Council to be enhanced through the Voluntary Sector Compact.	MC MVA Voluntary Sector Working Group
Developing the CP role of the Voluntary Sector Forum.	Promotion of the role of the VSF and development of a Children's Services Sub-group to be put on the VSF agenda for discussion, and the outcome of these discussions reported back to the Social Inclusion Partnership.	VSF
Developing the CP role of the Social Inclusion Partnership.	The addition of a third voluntary sector representative to the SIP, and the SIP's role in addressing the needs of disabled people and migrant workers to be on the SIP agenda.	SIP
Health and inequalities	Ensure the voluntary sector is aware of and feeds into the Joint Health Improvement Plan.	VSF
Developing the CP role of the Community Care Forum.	Develop effective systems to improve information flow between Community Care partner organisations - horizontal, within Community Planning framework.	CCF
	Develop effective systems to improve two-way information exchange between Voluntary Sector Community Care partners and Midlothian Council lead planning groups.	CCF
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting for further discussion and to progress with the development of a voluntary sector children services sub-committee and to discuss representation on the child protection committee/ sub committees; Request the Child Protection Committee to note the voluntary sector view that representation on the committee should be by a childcare organisation. Request the Child Protection committee to set up a practice sub group. 	VSF

6.0 More Information

Further information on any of the issues contained in this document can be obtained from:

George Wilson
Midlothian Voluntary Action
4/6 White Hart Street
Dalkeith
EH22 1AE

0131 663 9471



APPENDIX A: DELEGATES LIST

Organisation	Name
1.	Pat Matthews
2. Ageing Well	Kath Laing
3. Alheimers Scotland	Alaine Chalmers
4. Ark Housing	Janis Wadge
5. British Red Cross	Rhona West
6. CAPS	Kirstie Henderson
7. Castle Rock/Edinvar	Kirsten McFadzean
8. Children 1 st	Helen Napier
9. CISWO	Ian McAlpine
10. Crossroads	Ian Huggan
11. ELCAP	Helen King
12. ELCAP	Lorraine Smart
13. ELCAP	Margaret Wilson
14. Friends of Midlothian Children	Jacqueline McDonnell
15. Friends of Midlothian Children	Ann Coveney
16. Handicabs Lothian	Derek Mack
17. Health in Mind	Simon Miller
18. Home Link	Janet Wyngard
19. Loanhead Community Learning Centre	Mhairi Main
20. Loanhead Miners Welfare	Pat Kenny
21. Loanhead Miners Welfare	David Brown
22. MVA	Catherine Burns
23. MVA	Margaret McKay
24. MVA	Margaret Nisbet
25. MARC	Richard Vivian
26. McSence Group	Brian Tannerhill
27. MELD	Dave Gasparini
28. MELD	Janet Keogh
29. Midlothian Council	Kathryn Hendry
30. Midlothian Women's Aid	Carol Bathgate
31. Midlothian Women's Aid	Jean McIntosh
32. Midlothian Women's Aid	Tony Brown
33. Nordoff-Robbins	David Clement
34. Penicuik CAB	Russell Gray
35. Scottish Mining Museum	Alison Shepherd
36. Volunteer Centre	Laura Shepherd
37. WREN	Caroline Sanderson

WORKSHOP LEADERS, SPEAKERS, SCRIBES

Organisation	Name
38. HELPP	Stewart Skirving
39. Midlothian Council	Jess Collins
40. Midlothian Council	Alasdair Mathers
41. Midlothian Council	Andrew Gardiner
42. Midlothian Council	Christine Schaeffer
43. Midlothian Council	Norma McNeill
44. Midlothian Council	Rebecca McKinney
45. Midlothian Council	Susan Kerr
46. Midlothian Sure Start	Cheryl Brown
47. MVA	George Wilson
48. MVA	Eric Johnstone
49. MVA	Lesley Kelly
50. S.I.P.	Archie Pacey
51. Voluntary Health Scotland	Bill Weir

APOLOGIES

Health in Mind	Joyce Turnbull
Scottish Pensioners Assoc.	Alex McKinnon
MELD	Peter Dollive
Midlothian Women's Aid	Lisa Hill

APPENDIX B: PUBLICITY FLYER AND PROGRAMME



**VOLUNTARY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT
IN COMMUNITY PLANNING
CONFERENCE**

Conference	You are invited to attend a half-day conference focussing on community planning in Midlothian. The event will take place on:
Date	Thursday 22 June Loanhead Miner's Welfare 10am until 2pm <i>Lunch will be provided</i>
Purpose of the event	The purpose of this event is to identify methods of enhancing the representation of the voluntary sector in community planning partnerships and forums, and improving feedback mechanisms to the wider voluntary sector. This will also be an opportunity to discuss voluntary sector representation on Community Health Partnerships.
Proposed Outcomes	The outcomes we will be working toward on the day are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The voluntary sector will have a better understanding of community planning structures and processes in Midlothian;• Gaps in voluntary sector representation in community planning structures will be identified;• Agreement on the most appropriate voluntary sector representatives on community planning structures will be reached;• Methods of disseminating information on community planning by voluntary sector reps to the wider voluntary sector are agreed.
Programme	A Programme for the Day can be found overleaf.
Aimed at	Please note that this event is aimed at voluntary sector organisations, not at service users or user groups.
Booking	If you would like to attend this event, please complete the attached booking form. This event is being organised by Midlothian Voluntary Action, in partnership with Midlothian Council Community Learning and Development, with funding from The Scottish Executive.

PROGRAMME

Chair: George Wilson

- 9.30am Registration and coffee
- 10.00 Welcome
George Wilson, Manager, Midlothian Voluntary Action
- 10.10 Overview of Community Planning Structures in Midlothian
Jess Collins, Senior Policy Officer, Midlothian Council
- 10.30 The Voluntary Sector Compact
Alasdair Mathers, Regeneration and Social Policy Manager, Midlothian Council
- 11.00 Coffee
- 11.15 Good Practice in Representation
Bill Weir, Partnership Development Officer, Voluntary Health Scotland
- 11.35 Thematic Sessions:
- Health and Inequalities
Andrew Gardiner, Health Improvement Co-ordinator, Midlothian Council
Stewart Skirving, Co-ordinator, Healthy Living Partnership Project (HELPP)
- Children and Child Protection
Christine Schaeffer, Planning Manager Children and Families, Social Work, Midlothian Council
Cheryl Brown, Co-ordinator, Midlothian Sure Start
- Social Inclusion Partnership
Archie Pacey, Social Inclusion Partnership Member
Dr Lesley Kelly, Development Officer (Funding), Midlothian Voluntary Action
- Community Care
Eric Johnstone, Community Care Forum Development Worker, MVA
Carolyn Maxwell, Planning Manager Community Care, Midlothian Council
- Governance and Organisational Development
George Wilson, Manager, MVA
Alasdair Mathers, Regeneration and Social Policy Manager, Midlothian Council
- 12.35 Round up
- 1.00 Close and lunch

APPENDIX C: WORKSHOP NOTES

Health and Inequalities

Facilitators:

- *Andrew Gardiner, Health Improvement Co-ordinator, Midlothian Council*
- *Stewart Skirving, Co-ordinator, Healthy Living Partnership Project (HELPP)*

Participants:

- *Pat Matthews*
- *Kath Laing, Ageing Well*
- *Kirstie Henderson, CAPS*
- *Helen King, ELCAP*
- *David Clement, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy*
- *Ian McAlpine, CISWO*
- *Bill Weir, Voluntary Health Scotland*

1. The workshop started with an exercise which highlighted who in society has most and least health choices. This exercise was followed by a brief discussion on health inequalities and their causes, the barriers that exist, and the implications for life expectancy. The group was advised that health is improving generally but that there have been increases in health inequalities between the top and bottom ends of the spectrum.

2. Andrew Gardiner gave an informal presentation on the history and structure of health related community planning in Midlothian, using the flipchart to illustrate this. There was also reference made to the Community Planning charts tabled earlier. The group was advised of the means of feeding into the community planning process, for example, through individual health professionals; through the new Health Improvement Team; through the new Health Improvement Partnership (HIP) (and its various sub-groups); through HELPP; and through the Voluntary Sector Forum. It was emphasised that the VSF was the main Forum for voluntary sector organisations to feed into the community planning process and they were encouraged to make use of it, and also that it was likely to be the forum through which voluntary sector representation for the CHP would be chosen. A Public Partnership Forum was also being established to represent the public.

Health Improvement Team includes:

- Health Improvement Co-ordinator
- Co-ordinator, HELPP
- Public Health Practitioner
- Public Health Specialist
- And others - still in development

Health Improvement Partnership includes:

- Key representative(s) from Midlothian Council Cabinet
- Key representatives from Midlothian Council Divisions
- Key representatives from NHS
- Representation from the Voluntary sector - George Wilson, MVA, is the interim voluntary sector representative. The representation will be reviewed by the Voluntary Sector Forum.

Andrew advised that the main task of the HIP was to write a Joint Health Improvement Plan. The Community Health Partnership (CHP) would also have to write a Health Improvement Plan and it was intended to try to bring both Plans together to become one Plan.

It was also pointed out that health issues are also dealt with in a number of other community planning groups, for example, child, mental health, drug and alcohol.

Andrew advised that the planning process needed to follow four main pillars of the Scottish Executive's "Health Improvement Challenge" document: Early Years; Teenage Transitions; Communities; Workplace. Also, that they were expected to focus on: smoking; alcohol; drugs; homelessness; physical activity; nutrition; and mental health.

3. This was followed by questions and informal discussion.

Themes:

1. Are group members aware how they are currently represented in this area?

- Andrew gave details of representation in his presentation.

2. How well is the sector represented in this area?

- Diversity of work in the voluntary sector makes it almost impossible for one individual to represent all the views of the organisations that make up the local sector
- There was a comment that both Edinburgh and West Lothian are well ahead of Midlothian in this
- There was a feeling that the Council is not really aware of the health work done by the voluntary sector in Midlothian
- Public Involvement Worker has been a huge benefit in Midlothian

3. Are there weaknesses in the current representations?

- If community planning is going to be successful it is going to have to take on board views of individuals and individual organisations
- Need to make sure there is real representation and not just ticked off
- It was felt there was not enough representation of problems in deprived areas
- Lack of knowledge of Voluntary Sector Forum and other ways of feeding into process
- There is a problem when the bulk of those in a Partnership were from one sector, e.g. NHS or Council, and only two or three were from the voluntary sector or public - imbalance in power.

4. How could representation be improved?

- could feed directly through members of Joint Health Improvement Team
- could feed in through members of the Health Improvement Partnership and its various sub-groups
- develop the Voluntary Sector Forum as a more forceful body
- increase awareness of the Voluntary Sector Forum and its role feeding into the CHP and community planning process
- bring together views of community and smaller groups
- could feed through HELPP
- the comment was made that every issue could not be taken to the VSF but that contacts could be made there and representation made through these contacts
- would like to see relationships built up between sectors so that organisations can approach relevant people directly
- need to make best use of skills and experience of voluntary sector
- there needed to be wider recognition throughout the community planning structure that health improvement and health inequalities issues are all pervasive and key in all areas.

Children and Child Protection

Aim of the workshop was to discuss

- * Overview of the planning structure for children's services in Midlothian
- * Voluntary Sector representation on the sub-committees
- * Weaknesses in the current representation of the voluntary sector
- * Way Forward: Future representation, Two way information exchange within the sector

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

3 Key Inter-linked Themes Emerged

1. Development of a Children's Services Sub Group (flexibly arranged) within or representing the voluntary sector forum.
2. Communication -Sharing information between sectors
3. Representation vs Facilitation: Appropriate, Support, Burden

1. Development of a Children's Services Sub Group (flexibly arranged) within or representing the voluntary sector forum.

- Weaknesses within the children's service boards, where are we placed and who is representing?
- Need to develop a 'Practice Subgroup' under 'Child Protection', wide representation would be required
- Child Protection Practice Subgroup could feedback to other groups. This would be more manageable but need to find ways of making it possible.
- There is a voluntary sector forum but children's services/child protection is not specifically represented/discussed on this. Subgroup is needed or perhaps a compact within children's organisations this would include voluntary & public/statutory bodies/services.
- All sub-committees that were of interest to the group could circulate agenda so people could know in advance whether any issues would be relevant for them.
- Children's Service Planning- How to get the right people involved?
- Might be worth having an event for further discussion and to progress with the development of the 'Practice Subgroup/ children services sub-committee'.
- Who would co-ordinate the work of the children services sub-committee?
- Difference between the Child Protection Committee, which is strategic, and represents the voluntary sector, with the Practice Subgroup which would be cross sector.
- Need a starting point- what would the key pathways be?

2. Communication -Sharing information between sectors

- Two way communication is key - How do we achieve this?
- Awareness Raising: what other groups exist, educating and informing all concerned.
- How to ensure the wider complexities of child protection are understood by all & how to link all that this involves.
- Less clarity with some child protection issues also makes it more complex.
- Organisations need to be/are accountable. Engaging service users can create conflict/barriers when it comes to child protection issues.
- Need to bridge the gap between the voluntary sector & statutory services.
- Need to identify gaps in services- who is missing?
- Voluntary sector may not be aware of all the changes in services etc, yet this knowledge might impact on how they develop or plan there own service.
- Voluntary sector may not be aware of all the changes in services etc, yet this knowledge might impact on how they develop or plan there own service.
- Communication is key, Voluntary organisations need to form/meet , this would allow the sharing of information & experiences, raise awareness and help build alliances

- The sharing of best practice regards to using appropriate methods of communication, baring in mind confidentiality, child safety etc.
- Knowing who to contact to get the right information
- Room for improvement with all sharing accurate user-friendly information.
- Subgroup would need supplemented perhaps through email, e-forum. Worthwhile to look at MVA's model of e-briefings.
- Issues around Confidentiality need to be considered when sharing information (looking at this through work on the 'Integrated Framework')
- The responsibility is also on us to pass information on to each other.
- Co-ordinating information & ensuring accuracy.
- A network or central point for obtaining & sharing information would be useful.
- Again accuracy of information- changes in legislation/organisational policies, there are grey area which cause uncertainty, knowing who is responsible.
- Lead from child protection committee to disseminate policy clearly would offer some support with some of these issues. This would be a two way process as organisations need to raise issues and take responsibility.

3. Representation vs Facilitation: Appropriate, Support, Burden

- Representation vs facilitation on the child protection committees/ children's services sub committees, appropriate support for those doing the representing.
- Voluntary sector representation/ & how it engages with structures/partnerships & each other.
- How is representation effective and manageable for one person?
- There is a real gap with Children's services not being a specific issue on the voluntary sector forum.
- Overlap with groups representing on different structures
- Representation on the Child Protection Committee should be done by a child care organisations.

General discussion

Lots of work to do still around community engagement, co-ordination of community engagement.

Social Inclusion Partnership Workshop

Archie Pacey gave a short presentation outlining:

- The history of the Social Inclusion Partnership
- The membership of the SIP
- The funding
- The information produced by the SIP
- The SIP Plan Review

He tabled copies of the Closing the Opportunity Gap targets and an example of the deprivation information produced by the Social Inclusion Partnership Research and Information Group.

Are group members aware how they are currently represented in this area?

Some group members were not aware at all of the Social Inclusion Partnership or the Social Inclusion Forum, although other group members were actively involved.

How well is the sector is represented in this area?

It was noted that there were some good representation in place, such as MVA and the Community Council Federation, who could easily feed back to their members.

It was noted that the Social Inclusion Forum and the Voluntary Sector Forum are open to any voluntary organisation to attend.

Are there weaknesses in the current representation?

It was noted that the Closing the Opportunity (CLOG) targets do not specifically mention disability, which is an issue as the CLOG targets are used to allocated funding such as Futurebuilders. Many of the issues that impact on disabled people are also issues for other people, such as community safety, access, and traffic safety issues.

The issues of charities as businesses was raised, and the need for the Council to recognise that charities are operating as businesses. This should feed into the Compact.

How could representation be improved?

It was thought it would be useful to have a third voluntary sector representative on the SIP. It would be useful to have someone with an understanding of disability issues. It was noted that the Community Care Forum Worker attends the SIF, but it needs to be clarified if anyone with a disability remit attends the SIP.

It was noted that the SIP bases its remit on the CLOG targets, but it needs to do extra work to ensure that the needs of disabled people and recent migrant workers are also addressed.

The issue was raised in relation to the Compact of influencing Council procedure on issues such as traffic management. One group member said that the Council can provide a key for people with mobility difficulties to slow down the crossing at traffic lights, but no-one else was aware of this - an information issue. It was noted that the Community Councils can help to raise these kind of issues with the Council.

It was thought that a conference on community planning and the compact aimed at users of voluntary sector services would be useful.

Two-way exchange of information between voluntary sector reps and the wider sector.

It was thought that conferences like today's were a very useful way of getting information across and getting feedback.

It was noted that there are a lot of existing channels for informing the voluntary sector, including:

The Community Conference
The MVA newsletter (although you have to sign up for it, and read it!)
Community Council network
Individual voluntary organisations' newsletters

However, it was noted that there are so many consultations that individuals can suffer 'survey fatigue'.

The compact needs to have some kind of consultation strategy spelled out. As a starting point, consultations need to be well advertised and accessible to the 'layman'.

More information is required from the Council on contracts and service level agreements. It was noted that the Council now has a Procurement Officer.

Three key summary points

Appropriate representation

- Disability needs to be on the agenda as it is not a CLOG target

2-way communication/consultation

- Need consultation strategy with Council
- MVA newsletters, briefings, SIF, website
- Need influence on the less 'voluntary sector minded' bits of the Council

Access to information

- Contracts, Service Level Agreements

Community Care and Community Planning Workshop

What level of understanding did participants have of the community planning process before this morning?

Participants felt that they had had some awareness of it previously, but that the morning's session (diagrams) highlighted that the structures are more complex than they had realised.

How aware were group members of how their organisations/beneficiaries are represented within community planning?

Hard to see how organisation is connected into CPP structures/how interests are represented

Carers Action Midlothian linked in with older people's planning group—feels there is feedback and that its views are represented

Need better channels of 2-way communication: feel "connected in, but not always heard"

Planning mechanisms in council are overwhelmed—community planning aims and widespread representation seem unrealistic/unachievable

Uncertainty about how varied interests are represented in the overall process

What are the weaknesses in current means of representing community care interests in community planning?

We don't know the remit of all the CPP groups or who is in them—need better information

Don't think conflicting views are well accommodated

Do user groups have an awareness of community planning?

A very small number attend strategic groups

They have a voice at the level of individual organisations, but there need to be better ways of feeding this up through the community planning structures

How do we improve representation?

Don't add structures or make them more complicated—use existing mechanisms for representation

Need better flow of information between community planning structures/subgroups/voluntary sector: could be done through dissemination of minutes, website, MVA newsletter, events such as thematic workshops

Raise awareness among organisations/service users about community planning structures (posting diagrams, publicity), and about how they can have a voice in the process

Improve 'horizontal' relationships between partners

Create a 'who's who' guide to community planning partners in Midlothian

A dedicated resource/worker to disseminate information and facilitate communication

Community care 'chat room' /e-forum

'speed networking' sessions so people can meet each other

Three key summary points

- 1) We need more effective communication between partners—communication needs to be resourced through more effective use of money and people
- 2) There needs to be better understanding between partners/agencies about how their role relates to the wider sector. Agencies need to take a more strategic view and engage in partnership working in order to improve services
- 3) We need to enable the creation of a shared vision for the community planning process and maintain the motivation to achieve it (people need to see the results). We need to consider methods for doing this

Governance and Organisational Development

Leaders: Alasdair Mathers (Midlothian Council) and George Wilson (MVA)

Alasdair introduced the session by highlighting the fact that volunteers put in a lot of work within organisations without payment, because they want to. There is a need to think how to run organisations against principals set out and encourage everyone else to. How effective are forums/speakers/community planning. How do we know they're speaking on behalf of everyone, not always well represented. How many members/who are interested?

Attending this workshop were:

Laura Shepherd (Volunteer Centre); Mhairi Main (Loanhead Community Learning Centre); David Main (Loanhead Miners); Richard Vivian (MARC); Jacqueline McDonnell (Friends of Midlothian Children); Dave Gasparini (MELD)

Governance workshop questions

Are group members aware how they are currently operating 'governance' in their group/organisation?

MELD management committee under represented. Difficulties trying to recruit. Had the same core members for over 10 years. To move forward need to expand and include wider range of members on the committee.

Asked if users were part of the structure he replied 'yes' but felt it better for someone who had been a previous user rather than a current user.

Friends of Midlothian's Children can become members for a £10 per year fee. Anyone who is in need or had respite benefit from the organization's ability to offer time in their holiday homes. Management is made up of professional staff who are not paid but give of their time.

They get feedback from the 9 child care organizations they work in conjunction with as well as the families who receive the respite. Holidays fluctuate from year to year. Feels it would be very difficult to have users of service on committee as they don't have direct contact with families.

MARC have both formal and informal aims and objectives. Currently have 8 board members (1 nominated by council and 1 by Trades Union). The issue feedback forms and have a review of volunteers as well as talking to people. There is an informal resource right through the organization, but they try to keep the aims work in the community. They listen to community trying to get this feedback. They have sub-committees and members are encouraged to criticize/discuss/suggest/praise.

Loanhead Miners have a membership of between 16/1700 people. It is the best going club in the District. The committee is good to members. At each AGM they elect the committee and from this is taken the executive. Usually 100-120 members turn up for the AGM. It is not just the members but visitors to the club that keep it going. Huge strength it brings to community for £10 membership fee.

There have been significant changes. The 16 on committee get an honorarium for their effort, as some by-law says they cannot be paid wages. There are 10 sub sections within the club, but feels it could be even better.

Mhairi Main's comments were similar to Richard's. Her organization made up of service users and managers of After School Clubs etc. It is representative of the community. Trying to get members is difficult, and she would like more feedback from members. They try to speak to people using the centre. Difficult to get professional

people to come onto committee. Development of volunteers vital. Looking for a commitment but can't often get it.

Management group made up by volunteers and voluntary agencies. The true effect is sometimes the time factor. Feels she could do with more business involvement. They have 9 out of 12 possible board members. Voluntary representation on Community Planning volunteering not recognized. Need to energise and develop not frighten board members. Now too many rules and regulations.

How well does this work for you?

All agreed that legislation places large burden on people who take up responsibility.

Committee of 7. Now OSCR in place every new person has to read and sign a form regarding commitments and responsibilities. More difficult to find people wanting to do this. Disclosure legislation is also a problem, and is off-putting to volunteers.

Employment law is a minefield. Local members of committees (the salt of the earth) are frequently put off sustaining their community involvement because legislation is becoming so oppressive and time consuming. Big companies employ experts, but voluntary organizations don't have the same budgets and consequently expert resources. Process takes time

Since becoming a 'trading' company some members felt it was a step too far so came off committee. They have a lot of good volunteers though. Felt some form of accreditation should be offered to make it attractive to younger members of community, which they could use as part of their port-folio.

How do you ensure your users are properly represented/ engaged with (when you speak on their behalf)?

There is a difference between representation and facilitation. Do we have a right to represent the community or do something to find out about community? How do we get views and take these into Community Planning?

There are few routes back into the community to get this kind of engagement. Some progress is being made. There is a view that without this kind of work, and evidence of community support, the voice of voluntary agencies is given less clout by the Council/other public bodies. We need to be able to influence how public money is spent.

General conversation:

Sometimes down to the manager to develop the volunteer board and its accountability to users/communities. A lot to ask people, even managers to take on board. Am I providing/do I have the time? Someone has to do it. Has to come from the ground - visiting/building confidence/small things to get people articulate/may not get what we want but will get some changes.

We need to develop our understanding of what is possible in influence terms, discussions can be balanced by representing organizations/facilitating. How many times do views change from meeting/input/compromise? Do we represent a section of community or are we just a point of contact? We should ask users what they want. How are we getting information? What community? Women/men; old/young; employed/unemployed; disable/not disabled? What is the real priority to take back to politicians?

Politicians are mandated to make decisions on our behalf, but the group felt this was not an excuse for failing to consult. Democracy has to happen every day. Mandate can be dangerous - voluntary organisations speaking to public bodies have to look to the community as a whole in Midlothian and see if there is an organization with more priority than own, then don't stand in its way.

Politicians need to get away from the small picture. It comes back to how we work in our own organizations. The challenge back is that 'these folk don't really represent the community'. Politicians don't just represent their party, but the community. Evidence gives power. The more evidence, the more power.

How could you improve governance (e.g. best practice examples)?

Child Care and Early Years Partnership are an impressive Partnership which meet regularly to discuss issues and training. Involved with community with wide participation and rich in good practice. Council facilitates - private/voluntary and council partners. Genuine private sector involvement. Business and community organizations.

MARC - Social Enterprise profits and way staff treated. All features. What do we do with money? Involvement in partnership added value to MARC.

Loanhead Miners Welfare: There are two committees. One for the charity and one for the club. The club hires from the charity. (Bar pays charity)

Get money for advisers etc. Social Enterprises and key players help develop business plans.

Key Things

1. Voluntary boards need to deal with community development as an approach to their work.
2. Some agencies will fold due to new legislation but others will get stronger. Must have a vision as to what they want.
3. Public need to be aware of what happens. Publicity/public involvement/new technology/wider picture for involved citizen/still more community. Publicize what is going on.
4. Strengthen position by doing research to shape planning. Challenge to make sure the sector's voice gets into the planning process.
5. More credibility gained by evidencing consultation of service users/communities of interest.

APPENDIX D: MVA QUESTIONNAIRE

20 questionnaires returned

How effective do you think MVA is at representing the views of the voluntary sector in the community planning process?

Very effective Quite effective Not effective Don't know

How could MVA improve its effectiveness in representing the views of the voluntary sector in community planning?

Helpful if voluntary sector recognized the importance of MVA's position and improved level of participation e.g. through Voluntary Sector Forum.

Not aware/informed about MVA's representing voluntary sector - have not been asked for any views or opinions about any issues.

Today was the start for me in this area. I would now like to get more involved in the C.P. process in Midlothian and feel confident the MVA will be able to provide the information to do this at the level best for my organization.

More surveying of user groups

Continuing to involve services, service users in planning

Getting feedback at various forums

Most of the information I receive is from MVA. They are very effective at passing on information about the voluntary sector.

How effective do you think MVA is at feeding back information from community planning meetings to the voluntary sector?

Very effective Quite effective Not effective Don't know

How could MVA improve its effectiveness at feeding back community planning information?

As above (1st) - depends on Voluntary sector's willingness to participate

Perhaps I have not made myself aware of any feedback. Do read MVA newsletter which is very good. Haven't seen 'Midlothian Moving Forward Document'.

More of this.

More workshops & joint training such as today's event.

Communications in various ways. Also to add to forum agendas.

Find ways to impart the work of the voluntary sector to the general public - in a way the lay person understands.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

