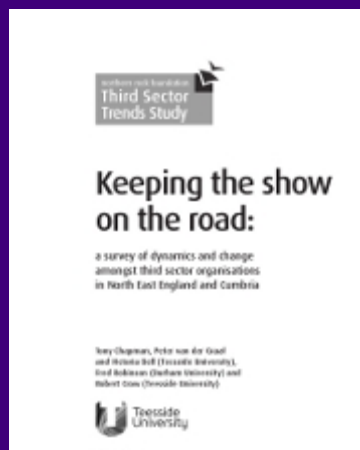


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inter-ACTION

RCVDA
**Leading
the Way**

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF RCVDA



Major new reports from Northern Rock Foundation Third Sector Trends Study reveal a sector Keeping the Show on the Road: for now?

"There are two groups; there are those that are basically saying we will do anything we can to cut back, we will tighten up and batten down the hatches and then there are the others who are saying we are open to transformation here."

Northern Rock Foundation has now produced the first phase of reports from its Third Sector Trends Study; a ground-breaking research programme on the scale, dynamics and needs of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in North East England and Cumbria.

The Study provides robust, comprehensive and freely available local and regional evidence to describe the sector. The Study will help organisations, infrastructure agencies, funders and government bodies who all need better information about the characteristics and activities of the third sector groups. Better data will help to improve funding negotiations, policy development and service planning. The Study will also assist the development of better methods for voluntary sector research nationally.

For more details see page 5



Season's Greetings
from all at RCVDA





VOICES FOR VOLUNTEERS FORUM FOR MANAGERS/COORDINATORS OF VOLUNTEERS

Our next Voices for Volunteers meeting will be held on Tuesday 30th November in **Room 12**, Redcar Education Development Centre, Corporation Road, Redcar TS10 1HA 9.30 am - 12.30pm (use main reception entrance and turn right).

We have invited Neil Walker from Job Centre Plus to talk about "Working Together" and to answer any questions you may have about volunteering and state benefits. After the break Nathan Bruce will do a presentation on Time Management - and hopefully we'll all pick up some tips for coping with our ever-increasing workloads.

If there is time Michele and Trish will outline a few ideas we've had for future discussion in "Getting the best from your Volunteer Centre". Followed by 'Yourspace' an opportunity for you to promote your activities and events and share news and training opportunities with a view to combining resources. This is quite a full agenda so to fortify you we have re-introduced the bacon or sausage sandwich breakfast!

To book a place please contact jill@rcvda.org.uk or ring 01642 440571.

Office for Civil Society launches consultation on new infrastructure programme

The Office for Civil Society has indicated that it hopes to invest in a new infrastructure programme for the voluntary sector, and has launched a consultation that asks charities and social enterprises how they would like the government to support them. The consultation document, published by the Office for Civil Society, says the government "wants to invest in a new programme of strategic interventions which will help organisations modernise and become more efficient and more entrepreneurial in order to take advantage of the opportunities ahead".

It says improving infrastructure could involve making better use of online support, encouraging better connections between small charities and mentors from businesses or larger charities, rationalising existing infrastructure bodies and directing support to front-line organisations.

"In the past, the government's approach to building the capacity and skills of civil society focused on a limited range of providers, primarily charities and social enterprises such as local councils for voluntary service," the consultation document says. "The current government wants to encourage better connections both among civil society organisations and with the public and private sectors."

A strategy document outlining the government's approach to the voluntary sector, published alongside the consultation document, says that the government will set out detailed plans early next year that will make it easier for charities and social enterprises to deliver public services.

The plans will include enabling commissioners to take into account the social, environmental and economic value of the organisations they commission services from, the document says.

The Cabinet Office has already announced that the infrastructure body Capacitybuilders would be abolished in March 2011.

The consultation questions and background can be found by going to: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/426258/support-stronger-civil-society.pdf

The consultation will close in January.

Cherub Counselling and Training Service



Cherub Counselling & Training Service is a new service based in Loftus, East Cleveland.

They recently held a successful open day, where their service was officially opened by Linda Bell, Mayor of Loftus.

The aim of the service is to offer low cost counselling to all. The counselling can include many issues including depression, anxiety or relationship problems.

They also run a specific project, The Resolution Project for Men. This project, funded by Redcar & Cleveland Council, is to offer free counselling to men and adolescent males affected by domestic or sexual violence or abuse.

For more information contact 07526513615 or email info@cherubcounselling.co.uk

Cherub Counselling & Training Service is sponsored and supported by Redcar & Cleveland Partnership, Business Link, LEGI, Ian Daniels and Jim Sore.



Safeguarding responsibilities of trustees

Source: Governance November 2010

Among the many things that busy trustees have to think about, arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children can be easily overlooked.

This is particularly the case when children are not the main focus of the organisation's activities but are involved occasionally or incidentally. But child protection and safeguarding policies are as much a part of good governance as sound financial arrangements and health and safety. Trustees play a key role in exercising their responsibilities for ensuring that their organisation is as safe as it can be for children.

Developing and implementing policies and procedures may appear daunting to those unfamiliar with child protection, but with the right help and support it is relatively easy for charities to put in place child protection arrangements that are proportionate and easy for staff and volunteers to understand and follow.

Make sure your charity has safeguards in place that will:

- protect children and young people from harm and abuse;
- enable staff and volunteers to know what to do if they are worried
- show that your organisation is responsible and has pride in its work.

Procedure supporting the policy should set out clear arrangements for recruitment and training of trustees, staff and volunteers and what they should do if they are worried about the behavior of a colleague or the safety of a child.

However, a policy, no matter how good it may be is pointless unless everyone in the organisation knows about it and uses it. All trustees, managers, staff and volunteers should be made aware of their child protection responsibilities through induction and training. Trustees or the senior manager should identify a designated person who can advise on recruitment and act as the contact point for child protection concerns. Additionally, the collective responsibilities of trustees for all aspects of the charity's operation, including the appointment of new trustees, must be clearly spelled out.

The key elements to consider in making an organisation safer for children are:

- a child protection policy and procedure for what to do if there are concerns about a child's welfare;
- a named person for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse and step-by-step guidance on what action to take;
- a rigorous recruitment and selection process for paid staff and volunteers who work with children;
- a written code of behavior which outlines good practice when working with children;
- a training plan and regular opportunities for all those in contact with children to learn about child protection and about health and safety;
- a whistle-blowing policy. This is an open and well-publicised way for adults and young people to voice any concerns about abusive or unethical behavior;
- information for young people and for parents or carers about the child protection policy and where to go for help;
- a protective culture that puts children's interests first – children must feel confident that if they have concerns someone will listen and take them seriously;
- guidance on taking children away on trips and on internet use: new technology safety, guidance on use of photographs, video, digital equipment and websites, including chatrooms; and
- policies on bullying and on health and safety. You will need processes for dealing with complaints and for taking disciplinary action where necessary.

The first step for trustees who want to ensure that their charity has proper safeguarding arrangements in place is to conduct an audit of their current arrangements. This will identify any gaps or areas for improvement and form the basis for developing an action plan. Guidance on how to do this is contained in the *Are they Safe* pack produced by Safe Network. Safe Network produces a wide range of advice, information and materials aimed specifically at charities and voluntary sector groups. They can be ordered from the website www.safenetwork.org.uk/resources/are_they_safe/Pages/default.aspx

N.B. RCVDA have a small number of Are they Safe packs available – please contact Karen McGarrity 01642 440571 or email karenmc@rcvda.org.uk



Increase in national minimum wage

The following minimum wage rates took effect from 1st October 2010:

- Standard adult rate (extended to workers aged 21 and over): £5.93 (rising from £5.80)
- Development rate (workers aged between 18 and 20): £4.92 (rising from £4.83).
- Young workers rate (workers aged under 18 but above the compulsory school age who are not apprentices): £3.64 (rising from £3.57)
- New apprentice rate of £2.50 per hour introduced (applicable to apprentices under 19 years of age or those aged 19 and over but in the first year of their apprenticeship).
- The value of accommodation offset also increases from £4.51 to £4.61.

Source: SocialEconomy Issue No 101

Charity Commission Advice

Following a recent Charity Commission inquiry into a charity for disabled people that knowingly employed a convicted sex offender and refused to carry out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, the Charity Commission gives the following advice to all trustees

“All trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with their charity. They must accordingly take all appropriate and reasonable steps within their power to ensure that this does not happen and the risks are properly managed. When beneficiaries of a charity are children and /or vulnerable adults, trustees of a charity must take reasonable steps to protect their welfare. These steps will include ensuring that there is a child and vulnerable adults protection policy in place and all persons coming into contact with children or vulnerable adults through their charity are aware of and follow that policy.

In charities where the trustees (and others, including volunteers) have direct contact with users who are vulnerable (for example, by reason of their age or mental health), more vigorous background checks to ensure their suitability may be necessary. All charity trustees have a duty of care and a duty to act solely in the interests of their charity. The Commission considers charity trustees risk being in breach of these duties if they fail without good reason to carry out appropriate CRB checks when they are entitled to do so. In some circumstances such failures may be viewed as evidence of misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity. It is also a criminal offence in some circumstances for someone to offer certain positions working with children to someone who is disqualified from doing so.”

Source: Governance Nov 2010

Does no-one have a conflict of interest?

Rightly or wrongly, it appears a truth, universally acknowledged, that a trustee of a charity who is involved in other organisations never has a conflict of interest. This (suprising) fact is confirmed by the general silence at meetings when trustees are asked to declare any interests they might have which could conflict with those of the charity.

When one looks at the number of Charity Commission investigations or inquiries with mis-managed conflicts at their heart this maxim may have some merit. However, one cannot help but feel that perhaps, just perhaps, there are more conflicts out there that might meet the eye.

For example, does a conflict arise from sitting on the board of a similar, rival charity? Or a charity's trading subsidiary? Is it acceptable to be involved in a company or organisation which is applying for grants from the charity? Conflicts of interest can be direct or indirect, actual or potential. They are not necessarily a problem but must be dealt with properly. There is a report into a case involving the Arts Council which sets out some useful lessons – this can be found at www.charitycommission.gov.uk



Ask the expert.

PENINSULA
BUSINESS WISE

Q. I want to limit the number of Saturdays and Sundays my employees can take off as holiday each year to 5 of each. I didn't include anything about this in their contracts of employment though. Can I still do this?

A. Yes, you can limit the number of Saturdays and Sundays your employees take off as holiday. In fact, you can exercise control over an employee's holiday leave no matter what day they choose to ask for. Many employers do not realise that they can dictate exactly when their employees can, and also cannot, take their holiday. This right can be exercised as and when holiday requests are made.

This means that, in your case, if an employee requests a day off on a Saturday when they have already exceeded your imposed limit, you simply refuse it. As long as you give the employee the amount of notice equal to the amount of time they want to take off, then you have acted within your rights. So if the request was for a day's holiday, you will have to give the employee a day's notice prior to the intended day off that you are refusing that request.

To give your employees prior warning you may wish to let you them know at the start of the leave year e.g. by sending a memo to all staff, or pinning a notice on the notice board, that you are limiting the amount of certain days on which holiday can be taken, or the amount of time to be taken during a particular period.

Employers can also make employees take holiday on a particular day/during a particular period by giving notice that is twice as long as the period you wish them to take e.g. an enforced holiday of one week would require two weeks' notice.

Requests from all staff should be treated in the same way. However, discretion should be had when dealing with a request that you would, under normal circumstances, refuse if the request is made by an employee wanting to observe a religious occasion or other similar situation which could attract a potential discrimination claim.

Q. I am hearing the Equality Act mentioned a great deal and wanted to know what the main points are.

A. This new Act replaces previous legislation (such as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and aims to simplify and ensure consistency wherever possible. The Equality Act 2010 covers the same characteristics that are protected by existing discrimination legislation – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity (known as “protected characteristics” or “PCs”) - but extends some protections to groups not currently covered, and also strengthens particular aspects of discrimination law.

Whilst many of the fundamental principles of discrimination legislation are largely unaffected, some other rights and responsibilities will:

- **Change** – for example, employees will be able to complain of harassment even if it is not directed at them, if they can demonstrate that it creates an offensive environment for them.
- **Be extended** – for example, associative discrimination (direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic) will cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex as well as race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.
- **Be introduced for the first time** – for example, the concept of discrimination arising from disability, which occurs if a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability.

The aim of The Equality Act 2010 is to provide legislative framework to protect the rights of all individuals and simplify and previous legislation; whilst introducing discrimination laws that will protect individuals from unfair treatment.

If you have any queries on the above then contact Russell Smith on 0797 692 2314 or via email, Russell.Smith@Peninsula-uk.com



**Safeguarding Children Board : Procedures “Drop-in” Session – no need to apply Tuesday 14th December 2010
Bridgeway, Allendale Road, Middlesbrough, TS7 9LF**

AIM – To raise awareness and provide information about the following issues:

- 09.30 – 10.50 am Recognising Private Fostering as a safeguarding issue – what everyone should know! (featuring the DVD “Someone Else’s Child”) www.privatefostering.org.uk
- 11.05 – 12.05 pm Safeguarding Children with Disabilities – some lessons from Serious Case Reviews
- 12.45 – 14.15 pm New Core Group Guidance – introductory briefing
- 14.30 – 15.30 pm Home Education – considering the safeguarding issues
- 15.45 – 16.30 pm Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession – an outline of the government guidance for practitioners and their managers.

Each session will start promptly (length of sessions vary) – please arrive 10 minutes early if you would like a cup of coffee.

Major new reports from Northern Rock Foundation Third Sector Trends Study reveal a sector Keeping the Show on the Road: for now?

Using a broad definition of the sector, including charities, social enterprises and smaller community groups not on official registers, the Study comprises:

- comprehensive mapping and cataloguing, including finances, workforce, governance and activities;
- surveys of a representative panel of organisations based on the mapping exercise;
- qualitative policy and stakeholder research.

Phase one of the Study, carried out over three years, commenced in spring 2008. The Foundation has brought together an expert research team for the Study. Professor John Mohan of the University of Southampton leads the quantitative work, alongside NCVO, Guidestar UK and Cumbria and Newcastle CVS. Professor Tony Chapman of the University of Teesside and Professor Fred Robinson of Durham University are running the qualitative strand.

The Foundation’s chief advisor for the programme is Cathy Pharoah, who leads an advisory group of key agencies including the Office of the Third Sector, ESRC, Carnegie UK Trust, and local and regional public and voluntary sector bodies.

The Foundation manages the research, and will contribute to the improvement of third sector research nationally by making both the findings and the methodological tools widely available. A second research phase, developing longitudinal elements of the programme, will be subject to future funding decisions at the Foundation and the potential involvement of other commissioning partners.

Copies of the reports can be viewed by going to:
www.nr-foundation.org.uk/thirdsectortrends/tt_reports.html

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and charity directory The Big Give have entered a partnership which could see donations to Lottery-funded projects increase.

The collaboration will offer projects funded by the BIG's flagship Reaching Communities project in the last 12 months, or those with active grants, the opportunity to add a BIG logo to their listing on The Big Give website. The logo, BIG asserts, is "not a quality mark but is useful for donors carrying out further due diligence into a charity".

Projects supported by the Reaching Communities initiative have had to undergo a rigorous application process and the logo will provide an easy recognisable marker for philanthropists considering charities to fund on The Big Give.

Jon Brooks, managing director of The Big Give, said the collaboration will open up "a valuable source of information for donors".

Cath Lee, chief executive of the Small Charities Coalition told Civil Society that the move potentially provides a good opportunity for small charities but urged that the scheme should be spread across all of BIG's funding programmes and that The Big Give should also look to other similar funding programmes.

"This potentially is a good thing for small charities, providing the arrangement extends to all BIG's funding programmes. Many small charities receive Awards For All funding and so would get an extra push from this.

www.theBigGive.org.uk www.biglotteryfund.org.uk



Best practice for councils managing spending cuts with civil society

Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, recently published examples of how local authorities can work well with charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises to minimise the impact of any spending cuts.

The examples, published jointly by the Cabinet Office and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), will provide a resource for local authorities making difficult funding decisions. They are accompanied by analysis of data to help local authorities in the decision making process.

Speaking at the recent NAVCA conference in Bournemouth, Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, said:

“Small local groups bring people together and drive social change, lose them and you risk losing the community. The examples of best practice that we have published today show that local authorities can do much to support these groups even while making the difficult decisions necessary to reduce the deficit.”

Kevin Curley, Chief Executive of NAVCA, said:

“These case studies show how valuable NAVCA members can be to local authorities in managing the impact of public sector cuts. There is no reason why local authorities should not follow these examples. In fact, they will be doing a disservice to their local communities if they make cuts without first talking with their local voluntary and community sector and listening to how they can help.”

At the NAVCA conference the Minister reiterated the Prime Minister’s message to the public sector not to do the ‘easy thing’ and target charities and voluntary groups for savings. He also called on charities and voluntary groups to ‘red flag’ poor practice and make sure it does not go unchallenged.

The best practice examples are published in a document called *‘Better Together’: Preparing for local spending cuts to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.*

This document can be downloaded from the NAVCA website at www.navca.org.uk/news/bettertogether.htm

2011 Census: 27 March 2011 Help tomorrow take shape

Every ten years since 1801 a census has been carried out to find out more about the people who live in England and Wales, and about the make-up of local neighbourhoods. The next census will take place on 27 March 2011.

By telling the people who run the census a bit about yourself and the people you live with, you will be able to help shape the services you get in your community.

During March 2011, you will get a 2011 Census questionnaire in the post for you and other members of your household to complete. For the first time, you’ll be able to do the census online. Or you can fill it in by hand and post it back to us.

It will ask all kinds of questions - about living accommodation, work, nationality, ethnic background, marital status, babies, children, students, older people, people with disabilities, and more. All to help paint a true picture of today’s society and identify the services people need in their neighbourhoods.

By doing the census, you will be able to help shape the kind of communities and services you and the people around you need. Everything you tell the census will be in complete confidence. No information will be shared with anyone else - at least not until 100 years have passed, when the records will be released to the public to become a treasure trove for people who want to trace their roots and find lost family members.

Government uses census population estimates to work out how much money to give each local authority to spend on public services. Local authorities use them to work out what kind of services they need to provide for people – schools, hospitals, childcare, community care, transport and more.

If the census misses anyone, you or someone you know could lose out. The 2011 Census needs to get as close as it can to a 100 per cent return rate, everywhere.

So the census really matters. It will make a very real difference to you, your family and friends.

To find out more about the what, when, why and how of the 2011 Census, visit www.census.gov.uk

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The information in the Interaction is published in good faith but RCVDA accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracy in the items.

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