

Devon Consortium

Organisations working together for the voluntary and community sector

Newsletter 1 | Spring 2008

New Look Devon Consortium!

The Devon Consortium is a group of 'infrastructure' organisations from the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) which supports frontline VCS organisations to work more effectively. It was set up in response to the government's 'Change Up' initiative to improve frontline services by providing high quality support from infrastructure organisations.

The new structure of the Devon Consortium, agreed at the last Full Devon Consortium meeting in January 2008, is represented in a table on page 2 of this newsletter.

The new Consortium will provide a more manageable decision-making body, whilst at the same time making that body more accountable to a the wider VCS, with broader participation and increased involvement in consortium business from frontline organisations.

In its internal management and function, the Consortium will also concentrate on its communications profile to ensure that the good work and benefits it provides are known and understood by all sectors rather than just the infrastructure providers.

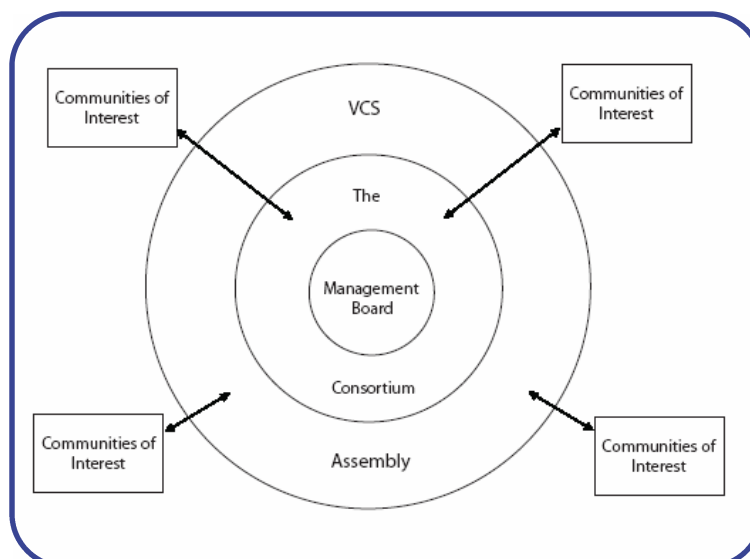
Any Voluntary or Community sector organisation or network can join the Devon Consortium providing they are delivering services to frontline organisations within the VCS in Devon.

If you want to be a part of the new Devon Consortium and wish to join, you must be able to

confirm that you deliver one or more of the following criteria:

- Management of an active membership of VCS organisations
- Provision of networking opportunities to frontline VCS organisations
- Practical support which includes training and capacity building to frontline VCS organisations
- Opportunities to enable the voice of the sector to be heard
- Provision of representation either on behalf of other organisations within the sector or management of processes to enable frontline organisations to represent others in the sector
- Ensuring equality of opportunity for contributions to be made to and participation in, the wider debate on the needs of the sector especially in the area of rurality, diversity and equality.

For further information, and to reconfirm your membership or to apply as a new member, please contact the Devon Consortium Secretariat on info@devonconsortium.net or on 01392 202055. Or you can go to the website www.devonconsortium.net



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Management Board – Made up of Community Council of Devon, Devon Association of Councils for Voluntary Service, Older People, Diversity, Young People, Volunteering, Devon Strategic Partnership and an independent chair	Accountable to the Consortium and responsible for determining the strategy and business plans and managing their implementation and monitoring through agreed work	Elected every 2 years. Meet at least 6 times a year
The Consortium – Open to organisations who meet certain criteria. Please see overleaf	Agrees the strategy and business plans as determined by the Management Board and based on the needs of the sector and other external factors	Meets twice a year
VCS Assembly – Open to any VCS organisation	An opportunity to contribute to the debate on how the VCS can be developed in Devon	Convened annually and will enable the Consortium to inform frontline organisations of their activities and gather input into future plans
Communities of Interest (COI) – Specific interest groups/networks which are open to any frontline VCS organisation who has registered an interest in being involved in shaping the debate about the sector in that area of work (e.g. work with young people/health)	An organisation can state which level they would like to be involved, and through the COI Leads, will be contacted and communicated as appropriate	Invited to some Management Board meetings for updates, as well as communicating remotely

What we have achieved and what lies ahead

In 2007 the Devon Consortium ran three projects:

- The Compact for Devon
- Performance Improvement
- and Representation.

In addition to central government funding, we have also been successful in drawing in further funding from Devon County Council for a number of projects, notably the Representation and Compact work.

A Compact for Devon

Frontline agencies who work with the statutory sector may need to be a signatory to the Compact. 'A Compact for Devon' is a document aimed to improve and develop the relationship between the VCS and the statutory sector in Devon.

Its development has been managed by a group of people known as the Devon Compact Hub. This group represents a diverse range of organisations, both from the VCS and the statutory sector.

There are 6 Codes of Practice which accompany the Compact, three of which have just been written and completed their 12 week consultation at the end of January 2008. The existing Codes are Equality and Diversity, Funding and Procurement, and Volunteering. The new Codes are Community Groups, Consultation, and Partnerships, the last being a first for any local Compact area in the country.

Local awareness raising events were held around each district in Devon, which included workshops, role playing, and three well-received performances

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of an award winning issue play called *Volunteer Vera*.

For more information, please contact the Compact Development worker on compact@dacvs.org.uk

Performance Improvement

Infrastructure organisations in Devon are now better equipped and able to support a wider range of groups, due to successful Diversity training, given to over 70 individuals from many VCS organisations around Devon.

'Performance Improvement' toolkits are also available for frontline organisations to get support in areas such as developing policies and legal structures. This project also supported infrastructure organisations in Governance and Workforce development.

Research was undertaken into developments in different infrastructure and ChangeUp projects across the country and updated on a website. A catalogue of toolkits and supporting documents are available on the website which are accessible by those organisations registered.

Governance packs were also distributed at a training event held in July 2007. Infrastructure organisations who took part in the training now better understand the concept of Governance, so that they can better support other VCS organisations.

Full Cost Recovery, and Procurement training was also provided, aiming to simplify this process for small groups. Legal training was also delivered, to help the VCS with employment issues.

For more information, please contact chiefexec@teigncvs.org.uk

Representation

There are opportunities for frontline organisations who wish to get involved, so that they can better influence the policies of local statutory sector agencies.

There is also a process for reimbursement of time if you represent the VCS. The Representation project relates to organisations leading in six thematic areas, which are Children and Young People; Health, Safer, and Stronger

Communities; Older People; Volunteering; Diversity; and Rurality. This structure is to provide an effective voice/representation for the VCS, and are known as Communities of Interest.

The project developed and implemented a system of reimbursement for representatives in partnership with Devon County Council, and at the moment they are developing a process for frontline organisations to get involved in the Communities of Interest.

This project will be creating toolkits and information to support Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) and VCS representatives with effective user friendly mechanisms to help them in their roles.

For more information, please contact mark@vysdevon.org.uk

The Future

We are now putting forward three areas of work to Capacitybuilders (the organisation responsible for delivering the Change Up programme) for the next phase of the Consortium's work:

- **Collaboration, Partnership and Representation**
- **Services to Grassroots**
- **Volunteering**

We are seeking expressions of interest from Lead Agencies to manage the first two of these programmes. This work will begin to help provide the voice of the VCS in both the design and delivery of infrastructure services to frontline organisations, and wider representation of the VCS to local statutory agencies.

It will also ensure the benefit of ChangeUp and other investment opportunities reach frontline organisations, and influence the political context and structure when developing strategies and plans.

More detail can be found on our website www.devonconsortium.net

Devon Consortium Frontline Consultation Results

In order to create and submit our **Business Plan 2008-11** and **Strategic Plan 2008-14** for our investors Capacitybuilders, a frontline consultation took place toward the end of 2007.

The full details of this consultation are available on the website at www.devonconsortium.net.

The tables on the right summarise the areas of work regarded as a priority and which formed the basis of the Strategy and Business plans being developed.

The complete Business Plan and the Strategic Plan are now available on the Devon Consortium website www.devonconsortium.net

Priority Areas

	Frontline results	Consortium
Services to Grass Roots	87	29
Representation	52	13
Volunteering	48	13
2-way communication	28	7
Profile & Communication	5	5

Cross Cutting Themes

	Frontline results	Consortium
Sustainability	74	17
Equality and Diversity	42	16
Community Development	41	10
Collaboration & Partnership	12	17
Quality Standards	20	9
Climate Change	20	5

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