



The Care Forum

**Children and Young People
Voluntary and Community Sector Joint Event**

Tuesday 16 October 2007, 9.45am-12.15pm

The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2QQ

NOTES OF MEETING

Present:

Michael Bennett, Relate Avon; Lucia Dorrington, Bristol City Council; Joanne Gray, Parentline Plus; Martin Hanstead, Knowle West Media; Carol Hayward, Bristol City Council; Jennifer Hill, B&NES Council; Malcolm Lamb, Good E.I.dea; Lisa Lee, Focus New Media; Christopher Lewis, NCH; Karen MacVean, Shelter; Dave Moore, Bridge Consulting; Kate Oliver, The Care Forum; Marvin Rees, Black Development Agency; Howard Symonds, Priority Youth Housing; Cheryl Wycherley, Voscur; Councillor Derek Pickup, Bristol City Council; Grace Deathridge, Voscur; Clare Paine, National Autistic Society; Gez Smith, Delib; Jean Smith, Nilaari Agency; Davina Evans, Supportive Parents; Julia Nibloe, YWCA; Tony Benjamin, Barnardos; Julia Walts, HWV PIPA; Sean Kenny, Voscur; Amer Salman, Bangladesh Association; Michele Webber, CYPS; Bobby Owen, Contact A Family; Katwyn Mason, NAS Bristol

Apologies:

Jinny Paige, Childtime.

1. **Welcome and introductions to the panel by Kate Oliver. The Care Forum**

Explained three organisations involved in these joint events and meeting history. Discussed purpose of meeting, meeting programme and housekeeping.

2. Address by Chair, Councillor Derek Pickup, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Bristol City Council

Presentation on information technology and communication (ITC), the need to take modern forms of communication more seriously and how these forms of technology impact on the role of a councillor and democracy.

3. Presentation by Carol Hayward, Corporate Consultation Manager, (responsible for e-democracy)

Presentation notes attached (Powerpoint – 1.66mb, Adobe Pdf 1.15mb)

Additional notes:

- At the time of the meeting it is 'Local Democracy Week', a week aimed at helping young people to understand local government.
- Young people are not apathetic, but are interested in issues, not political parties.
- The anonymity of voicing opinions online is a useful opportunity.
- A lot of young people use technology in the evening.
- Initiatives need to be marketed in the right way, e.g. using plain English, easy to use, etc.
- Slide 20 – get best results (most viewpoints) going out on the street and asking people
- Slide 21 – need channels in Council and links with Young People's Forum
- Slide 24 – broadcasting council meetings on web now.

Questions to Carol Hayward

Q1: How prominent are e-petitions, i.e. how much are they used?
And what action do Councillors take arising from petitions?

CH: They are on the Council's website, www.bristol.gov.uk/epetitions, and are being used more in some parts of the city, but still growing. Non-nouncillors and Councillors can go in and set up petitions. The Council alerts the ward or rep to the petition. When the petition is submitted, action is then taken. The person who started the petition gets a response and the response gets posted on the website. (Direct emails on the website are being developed for feedback).

Q2: Can voluntary sector youth groups get involved in 'I'm a Councillor, get me out of here' too ?

CH: Yes, that's a good idea. If they are interested they can go on the mailing list and for any other online youth events.

- Q3: How are people's voiced concerns fed into the policy-making process?
- CH: After a petition has closed a written report is sent to the right person. Regarding consultations, these run for a period and results get reported to the relevant person or department. With the 'I'm a Councillor, get me out of here' there needs to be better linking and better channels to feed information back to the right person. Information needs to go to a committee for them to consider. These routes need to be established to improve communication.
- Q4: The Children & Young People Plan is available to download on the website but it is really hard to find, as the website isn't that user friendly. (It was also suggested that the Council could consult on what difficulties people are experiencing).
- CH: Direct Communications Dept. can provide links to it. The website is being improved soon and they are trying to get feedback.
- Q5: How are the Council engaging people without SMS etc?
- CH: Libraries are a key way forward and links with these need to be improved, and also with Learn Direct Centres.
- Q6: How does the Council promote e-petitioning?
- CH: Through online networks, The Evening Post, Libraries. The Council is aware that it needs to do more and is trying to expand links.
- Q7: Can the e-democracy department offer free IT support advice to organisations that are Council funded, to help them evaluate the success of their service?
- CH: The Council can offer only limited support as this department is a small team. They might have to charge for their time. They try to be helpful when they can, but can't always offer free support. There is information on the e-democracy website.
- Q8: How does the Council measure outcomes?
- CH: They collect demographic outcomes by using an online survey to try to establish if they are reaching a broad section of the community. They gather statistics from online discussions and online surveys. They are using improved software to get more focused statistical surveys, for user testing and wider scale.

Q9: How does the Council measure the impact of views they have gathered and decisions made by the Council?

CH: The Council have to make difficult decisions. Some issues are very in depth, which makes them difficult to measure objectively. It would need to get external objective consultants to help with this.
The Planning and Performance team in CYP Department of the Council is currently doing a service delivery plan, where they are tracking the impact of what users have told them and what they are doing. They are using service information to influence planning.

4. Michelle Webber, Communications Consultant, Children & Young People's Services

The Council is in the process of producing a Communications Strategy and is aware that there is work to do to improve internal and external communication. Michelle wants to get information from delegates on how they can do this, to start on a blank sheet, so she is happy to talk to anyone to get feedback. She wants to know what the VCS sector's needs are and wants to communicate as partners generally.

Feedback/Comments to Michelle

Q1: The Bangladesh Association's young people's programme had funding from the Council. They think 50% of their time was spent on administration with the Council.

MW/CH: E-based systems should improve that a lot.

Q2: A lot of Councillors/Council employees don't understand what the VCS sector is about and haven't heard of Voscur, The Care Forum or the Black Development Agency (BDA). How could this be improved so that they can 'buy in' to the knowledge within the sector and so that they know who to get in touch with relating to particular issues?

MW: The Council are aware that roles need to be better understood (both ways). With regards to communication the Council wants to know which form of regular communication is most useful: email updates, e-newsletter, website?

Q3: A delegate commented that a mixture of different forms of communication would be good, on website and email updates too, and should be done in partnership. Ongoing information should be updated and communicated and there should be info for people who are not in networks.

- Q4: The Council needs to be aware that some organisations are overwhelmed by email information and can miss things owing to volume. They need to be marked 'priority', etc. so that things are not missed.
- SK: Sean from Voscur is doing a workshop on how to 'sieve out info' on his stall.
- Q5: There is so much information from different parts of the Council and they all communicate in different ways. It needs to be more unified.
- Q6: It would be a good idea to write a ten-point principle compact, written by the Council and the VCS together to organise communication on both sides.
- MW: Face-to-face communication would be better, for access to programme directors and policy makers.
- Q7: Lucia Dorrington, from Planning and Performance team at the Council asked if the annual conference works as a format or not. Please let her know. lucia.dorrington@bristol.gov.uk

5. After Refreshments and Networking, stalls provided advice

6. Panel members report back

Jane Crane, Bristol City Council:

The Children & Young People Department is in the process of updating the Bristol Parenting Support Strategy, and is consulting parents and providers with questionnaire on their website. Please visit the site and fill in parts one and two, which are compulsory (can then skip to next page if you like). She wants to encourage small and large providers.

Michelle Webber:

Thinks today's meeting was a good kick-off for how Council can work differently and effectively. Wants to signpost and rationalise info and meet in a smaller group to build understanding.

Carol Hayward, Corporate Consultation Manager:

She wants to strengthen links and improve partnership working. She thinks it is important to feedback to the public who have given views. It is good that Cheryl from Voscur can help promote 'I'm a Councillor, get me out of here' more widely. She wants to improve the promotion of services through libraries and free internet centres, etc.

Gez Smith, Delib:

He has had good feedback on interactivity, gaming, etc. and realises the importance of demonstrating feedback and showing that things have happened. It needs to be embedded properly.

Sean Kenny, Voscur:

Can offer IT advice on how to take all info needed for jobs and then make easier to manage

Cllr Derek Pickup:

The meeting has highlighted the importance of good information exchange, which should lead to action and then to change. As we are all overloaded by information and ways to engage, we need to make this engagement meaningful, which should lead to positive change. We need to think about how the Council can operate more effectively and see Councillors as a tool for making the Council work better.

Kate Oliver, The Care Forum:

She was pleased to see so many Council strategy leaders at the meeting and emphasised how welcome they are at all network meetings. She pointed out that the overlap of organisational cultures and meeting of minds could make a big difference. She also posed the question as to how we consult with very young children as well as with young people.

Cllr Derek Pickup closed the meeting.

7. Evaluation

The feedback from the evaluation questionnaire was as follows:

What comments do you have about participating in the event?

- I've learned a lot from a very low base of knowledge. Do make clear that people from statutory authorities are welcome and circulate information re meeting widely
- Very useful, gained much from it
- Useful to learn about RSS and other technologies
- Not really of great interest to a very small voluntary organisation
- Fine, good event
- Excellent event – need to engage via Voscur website
- Well organised and clear. Would have been good if chair had asked people asking questions to identify where they were from
- It was a useful and informative event that opened up a thought process or two; very useful
- Useful networking opportunities and information given

- Very useful, especially e-tech.

What was the most significant outcome of the event for you?

- Will go back to B&NES and find out what is happening e-wise, with more information re what is possible
- Meeting voluntary and community (VCS) sector partners and understanding portfolios
- Networking opportunity
- None
- The chance to speak to Derek Pickup about CYPs
- Learning about RSS and the power of interactivity
- Improved communication between the council and the voluntary sector
- Realisation that the petition facility of BCC could be used to our ends; information update
- Enabling contact with others of similar interests
- Networking
- Know more about e-technology and what C&YP services are doing.

Any other comments?

- Initial publicity could have made clearer what e-consultation involves. I wasn't sure if it was relevant to me as I know nothing. Would also have been useful to know there would be an emphasis on young people, as the B&NES person planning consultation with young people would have liked to come
- Excellent, need to make better links (with our services/systems)
- Powerpoint presentation would be improved by closing blinds, not obscuring screen by the speaker or the OHP machine. Stalls would have been better to have 2 x 20 min sessions, i.e. repeat the session so more people can attend
- Too much of an agenda around e-communication, when an update on the voluntary sector funding cliff would have been good.