

The Brighton and Hove Transforming Local Infrastructure Project

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

February 2012

What is the Project?

A partnership made up of six organisations based in Brighton and Hove has successfully secured over £300,000 in government funding to transform local support services to grassroots groups, charities and other not-for-profit organisations in the city.

What is the aim of the Project?

The aim of the project is to explore the potential for merging a number of services which are currently provided by different organisations, into one single support organisation for community and voluntary action. The project will develop and redesign current support services to ensure that they are efficient and of high quality, and also provide more co-ordinated support to volunteering in the city. The project will also look to build relationships with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action.

Why has this Project been started?

The government made up to £30 million available in short-term funding, via the Big Lottery, to provide better support to frontline community and voluntary groups by transforming local support services. Partnerships of organisations were invited to submit a bid to the fund in October 2011.

In Brighton and Hove there are currently a number of organisations providing support to community and voluntary groups and organisations in the city, and it has become increasingly apparent that the split nature of support has resulted in perceived and real gaps in support for community and voluntary action. The gap in support is particularly felt by small to medium sized organisations in the city.

In October 2011, six organisations came together to discuss what could be done to improve support to the community and voluntary sector in Brighton and Hove, and to bid for funding to enable change to happen. In February 2012, it was announced that the partnership project had been successful, and would receive over £300,000 to transform local support services.

When will the project start?

The partnership is currently setting up the project and project structures, and the project will begin in earnest from April 2012 and aim to be completed by October 2013.

Who is involved?

The partnership leading and involved in the project includes the following six organisations: Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove, Impetus, The South East Wellbeing Consortium, The Business Community Partnership, and the Trust for Developing Communities.

There are also a number of organisations that will work with the partnership of the project including: Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP), Care Co-ops, Community Base, Community University Partnership (CUPP), People Can, The Resource Centre, and The Sussex Community Foundation. Brighton and Hove City Council, the Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and local businesses have also voiced their support for the project.

What about the Working Together Project?

The Working Together Project (WTP) was a key member of the partnership; however its closure at the end of March 2012 means it has had to withdraw from the project. The gap left by WTP's closure in the city is large and difficult to fill; the services that they provide are much valued and needed within our local communities and the relationships and trust that they have built up with over 1,000 community and voluntary groups will be a challenge to replicate. A staff member from the WTP will continue to be involved in setting this project up, up until the end of March 2012. As a matter of priority the partnership of organisations leading this project is discussing what can be done in the short-term to fill some of the gap left by the closure of WTP, and what needs to be done in the long-term to ensure that training is a part of the new single support organisation.

Who is leading on this Project?

The partnership of six organisations will lead on the project and have responsibility for achieving the projects outcomes. However, the Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) will be recruiting a specific member of staff to lead on this work, and also has lead responsibility for co-ordinating the project and for reporting on this work to the project funder: The BIG Fund which is the non-lottery funding operation of the Big Lottery Fund.

How will decisions about the Project be made?

A strategic working group will be set up to look after the strategic direction of the project. This group will be independently chaired. A small project delivery group will also be set up to manage the day-to-day activities of the project.

How will the project involve community and grassroots groups?

As part of writing the proposal for this project, the partnership has already involved and spoken to a wide range of community and grassroots groups to find out what help and support they need and how they would like to receive it; this process will continue once the project is up and running and is likely to take the form of online surveys, and various consultation events and activities. In addition to this, the partnership will set up a reference group made up of frontline grassroots groups, charities and other not-for-profit organisations which will meet three times in the lifetime of the project to advise the working group. The partnership will send regular communications about the project's progress through its communication channels and will listen to the views and feelings of community and grassroots groups in the city about the support services that they want and need.

How will the project ensure that the voice of equality groups is heard?

The partnership leading this project is committed to ensuring that the design and delivery of new and current support services are accessible and take into account the needs of equality groups and neighbourhood groups. One way this will be achieved will be to ensure that a voice for equality groups is represented on the working group for the project and that equality groups and neighbourhood groups are also included in the membership of the reference group. Representatives from equality groups and seldom heard groups in the city are particularly encouraged to contact the partnership with any ideas as to how support services in the city can be improved.

Why is this Project so significant?

This funding offers a one off opportunity to radically change the way that support services for community and voluntary action in Brighton and Hove is provided and delivered. The project will involve the local community and voluntary sector to ensure that the single support organisation has the sector's best

interests at heart and that the support is delivered in a way that the sector wants. The single support organisation will first and foremost be grounded in the needs of the sector.

The single support organisation will not only provide a much needed one point of contact and communication channel for community groups and voluntary organisations, but also for public sector organisations and local businesses. This should help reduce complexity and duplication as well as provide economies of scale and efficiencies. The project will look to build on and fulfil the city's volunteer strategy to ensure co-ordinated support to volunteering in the city happens, and seek to build relationships with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action. All of this activity will enhance local community and voluntary action and ensure that the sector is best placed to contribute to achieving key citywide outcomes.

What will the funding award be used for?

This project aims to break away from existing patterns of delivery and to rationalise current support services into one organisation. The funding secured provides the investment to undertake this transformation and rationalisation and to bring about real service change. The fund does not cover the cost of current or future support service provision and delivery.

What are the challenges?

This is an ambitious project which proposes to make radical changes to the way that community and grassroots groups receive support in the city, and the way that volunteering in the city is supported and relationships are built with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action. Change, particularly on this scale, takes time to happen and conversations about merging of services are going to be difficult and challenging. However, the partnership is committed to moving support services in the city forward in a positive way to bring about more efficient, sustainable and high quality services to support community and voluntary action. Immediate challenges for the partnership include setting up the project structures, and taking action in the short-term to fill some of the gap left by the closure of the Working Together Project.

What about training for community and voluntary action?

The closure of the Working Together Project leaves a massive gap in training for local community and voluntary action. Whilst there are a number of training providers in the city, not all provide training for free or have the links into communities to provide reactive and flexible training. It is important that the new single support organisation is in a position to provide the training that is much needed by the sector. The partnership of organisations leading on this project will be discussing what they can do in the short-term to fill some of the gap left by the closure of the Working Together Project.

How can I get involved?

If you are interested in hearing more about this project as it develops, email Libby Young on libby@cvsectorforum.org.uk or call 01273 810237, and we will send you updates on progress of the project and information on any surveys, events or activities that you may wish to get involved in.