

Infrastructure Contract Update

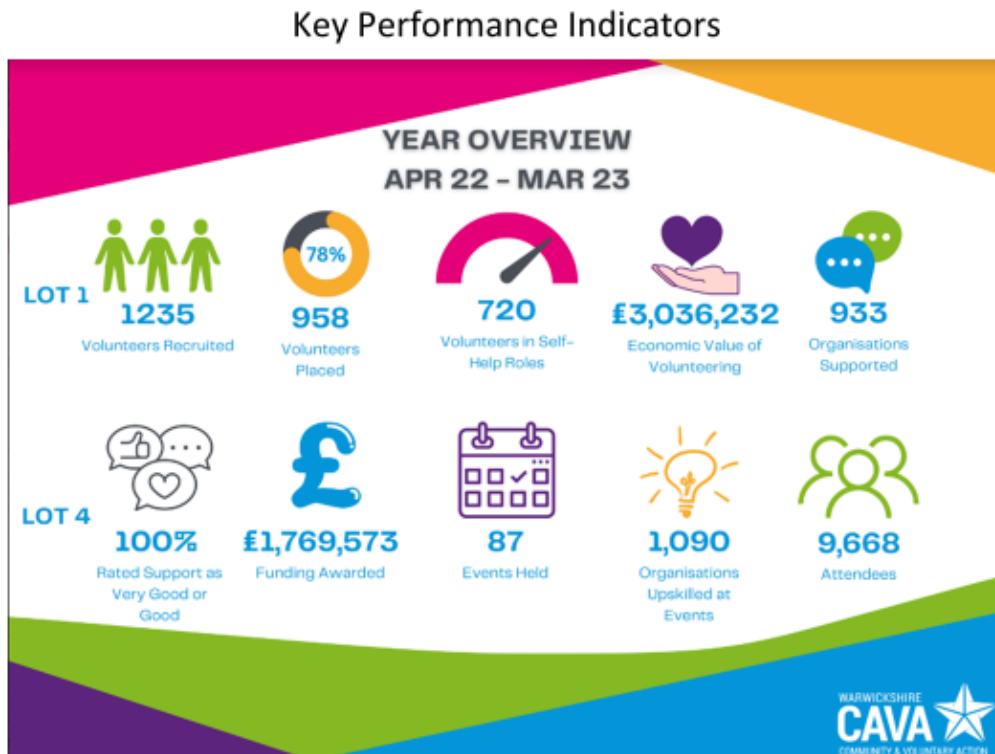
April 2022 - March 2023

Context

Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA) is commissioned by Warwickshire County Council to deliver four lots: volunteering, social action, social enterprise; and collaboration and partnerships. WCAVA works in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Grapevine (Grapevine) and Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency (CWCD) to deliver the programme.

The lots for volunteering and collaboration and partnerships are delivered by WCAVA, with the social action lot delivered by Grapevine, and the social enterprise lot delivered by CWCD.

Key Performance Indicators





Annual overview

Volunteering:

WCAVA aims to create a positive volunteering environment in Warwickshire, where volunteering is open to all, volunteers can make a difference to their community, enjoy their volunteering experience, and volunteering is celebrated.

We have volunteering coordinators based across Warwickshire providing support in person and virtually.

Our volunteering role:

- connecting organisations and volunteers via promotion and brokering of volunteering opportunities;
- promotion of volunteering opportunities to individuals;
- corporate social responsibility and employer supported volunteering support to businesses;
- good practice support and guidance to voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations around volunteer brokering and management;
- volunteering events, forums, and training; and
- volunteering awards and celebration events including the Big Help Out in June as part of the Coronation.

Challenges for volunteering:

- recruitment for trustee roles;
- increased demand on volunteer capacity from statutory services;

- complex needs of people being referred to volunteer and support to place them appropriately;
- change in volunteer profile post-Covid;
- recruitment and retention of volunteers; and
- capacity of organisations to support volunteers.

Social action

The Social Action Warwickshire project delivered by Grapevine aims to nurture community-led action in Warwickshire (specifically Camp Hill), helping local people voice their problems and aspirations and then leading action to tackle these problems.

Grapevine is working to a strategy that develops individuals from the area to become community leaders, drawing on their knowledge, skills, community connections, and using Grapevine's community organising techniques and training to make long term and sustainable community lead changes in the area.

Convening those who emerged as leaders/potential leaders from listening and mapping to connect and plan:

- setting up actions and activities;
- mobilising others to get involved as leaders and participants; and
- creating new ways of communicating with service providers and others whose work impacts on the area.

There are currently three areas of focus, and together they create an interconnected ecosystem, supporting each other and growing. These are community events, a resident led action group, and a youth voices group.

All three groups are linked to the Camp Hill Community Group, which Grapevine is also supporting in its development and developing the leadership potential of the people within the group.

All three groups will have a continued focus on recruitment and development of more people. Everybody will be encouraged to move around the areas of work and develop their skills.

Issues identified in Camp Hill:

- anti-social behaviour;
- lack of opportunity for social connection, places to meet or activities;
- lack of aspiration, a feeling that the area has been forgotten and that nothing is likely to change so why bother;
- a disconnect between the old and new communities;
- residents' capacity to commit time to making change; and
- residents' confidence to be part of making change.

Grapevine invites young people to all the meetings it plans. Often, they just join in because they see the door is open and are interested to find out what is going on inside. This develops trust and engages the young people with the Community Association. For example, four teenagers came to a recent events' planning group meeting. They joined in when it suited them, spending time on their phones and chatting to each other, challenging

us with tricky questions and behaviours to see how we would respond. As the meeting evolved, they added to conversations, bringing friends in at one stage to help make their point. They transitioned from challenging us to confiding in us and sharing their insights and aspirations.

Social Enterprise

CWCDA are supporting social enterprises to build stronger and more sustainable businesses and communities. CWCDA have supported forty new and eighty-two existing social enterprise organisations across Warwickshire via 1-1 advice and group support sessions.

Across the reporting year CWCDA have identified a number of challenges and opportunities for the social enterprise sector as follows.

Challenges:

- coronavirus has meant that many organisations have had to use reserves to survive, resulting in many groups having cashflow issues;
- barriers to procurement and securing contracts e.g., payment in arrears – cashflow;
- lack of understanding of changes in funding sources and less funding available;
- access to finance;
- inflation (increased wages) – problems recruiting; and
- increased costs - affordable premises.

Opportunities:

- Increase in awareness of the social enterprise sector;
- anchor institutions wanting to work with the social enterprise sector;
- funding picture beginning to be clearer - access to finance;
- increased willingness to share knowledge in the sector (peer-to-peer schemes are developing); and
- support from local Councils e.g., Warwickshire County Council

Collaboration and Partnerships

WCAVA has a team of officers working across the localities of Warwickshire, providing 1-1 support, groups' advice, webinars, and training sessions to the VCSE sector.

Across the year WCAVA has undertaken:

- delivery of safeguarding awareness training sessions for children and adults;
- creation of a comprehensive resource library for VCSE sector organisations;
- arranged a series of meet the funder events;
- participation in a range of boards, partnerships, and meetings to act as an effective conduit for the VCSE sector;
- advice and support on Charity Commission requirements, fundraising, and business planning;
- facilitated meet the funder events and provided bespoke advice to ensure groups are up to date on available funds; and
- continued to support the VCSE sector with emerging issues and trends.

Issues presented by the VCSE sector across the year:

- reduced volunteer hours;
- increased demand for services and more complex need being presented;
- increased costs – operations, premises and running costs;
- lack of affordable premises;
- difficulty recruiting and retaining staff;
- uncertainty re future government funding and contracts;
- difficulties reaching potential private sector sponsors;
- reduced reserves;
- access to funding for core costs;
- more demand for available funding; and
- increase in governance issues for organisations

Opportunities for the VCSE sector:

- emerging health and wellbeing agendas;
- engagement in Council and other partner priorities including levelling up and the UK shared prosperity funds;
- continued responsiveness to emerging issues and priorities; and
- opportunity for alignment with other VCSE sector providers increasing capacity and reducing duplication.

Case Studies

Rugby Borough



The challenge

Initially, in October 2022, the Volunteering Coordinator in Rugby became aware of the 'Feed my Sheep' fund, highlighted at a networking event, by Christ Church in Brownsover. They explained that the fund would be used to set up a warm hub initiative known as the "Brownsover Family Winter Project" (BFWP) with its aim to provide a hot meal, warm space, a well-lit space for children to complete homework etc during 4.30pm – 6pm every evening

including weekends from October to the end of March 2023. The purpose of this project was to offer support to residents living in an area identified as more deprived, especially as they would be more affected by the 'cost of living' crisis this winter.

Meeting the challenge

The Volunteering Coordinator contacted Peter Bone, the Vicar of Christ Church to ask if they needed any support to recruit volunteers. She then met with his wife Lynne Bone, who was coordinating the project and discussed in detail what was needed in terms of number of volunteers and the Volunteering Coordinator provided role templates, safeguarding policies, volunteer agreement examples, support with using the cava portal and contacted potential volunteers directly to promote the project. Lynne worked in partnership with Brownsover Community Association, Boughton Leigh Infants and Junior School and Christ Church to promote the project and recruit volunteers. The Volunteering Coordinator contacted the local Job Centre and spoke to Stephen Salter who manages the Job Coaches and explained that certain roles would involve food preparation and therefore require a L2 Food Hygiene Certificate. The BFWP agreed to provide the training to gain this certificate, which would help to provide a 'step into employment' for some of his clients interested in catering careers. WCAVA's social media and newsletters were also used to promote the project. The Volunteering Coordinator also volunteered at a shift to gain a greater insight into the project and used this to continue to promote the project in social media as well as contacting the local newspaper to gain support.

North Warwickshire Borough - Inclusive Volunteering and Partnerships



Working with people who are far away from employment for many and varied reasons. Volunteering would help them move forward in many ways both personally and professionally. North Warwickshire Borough is an area of high employment and many of the users of the Job Centre are people with additional needs. The Volunteering Coordinator for North Warwickshire delivers a pop-up session at the Job Centre on the first Tuesday of the month and this partnership with the Job Centre staff has led to referrals at the pop-up sessions and throughout the month.

Meeting the Challenge

Two men were referred to meet the Volunteering Coordinator. One young man, "M," age 24 came with his dad, he has Aspergers and said he wanted to get out of the house and do something useful. Another man "A," in his fifties, in recent years had lost his job and his wife had died. He had experienced depression and severe anxiety. He also needed to get out of the house and meet with people as he had become very isolated. Following meetings with both men we talked about the sort of thing they would like to do and what they could gain from being volunteers. In addition to working in partnership with the Job Centre we work in partnership with Atherstone Town Community Football Club (ATCFC) and have recruited a number of volunteers for them. I spoke to Gary Fox who is one of the leads in volunteer recruitment and specialises in supporting and including volunteers with additional needs. Gary arranged to meet both men separately and arrange for them to visit the club.

Outcomes and Impact

Both men have now started volunteering at ATCFC and this is going well.

Social enterprise support - DWRM Consultants CIC

DWRM believes that education is central to prisoner rehabilitation. One of its aims is to increase the number of students accessing higher education in prison to 25% of the prison population.

CWEDA Support included:

- business planning;
- social impact measurement;
- set-up – legal structure;
- financial planning;
- access to finance;
- accessing commercial contracts; and
- policies and procedures.



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Warwick District - Cost of Living Network Event (19 October 2022)

WCAVA in Warwick District, in partnership with Warwick District Council, planned and delivered a Cost of Living Network and Information event in October. The event had been organised to understand cost of living challenges and pressures on VCSE sector organisations, and to explore solutions and opportunities to respond, particularly through greater partnership working, to tackle key fundamental issues around the crisis.

The event took place at St Peter's Roman Catholic Church Hall, Leamington and was attended by 37 people from 26 different VCSE organisations.

There was a Market Stall Exchange at the event so organisations could share information and leaflets. Stall holders included Healthwatch Warwickshire, Helping Hands, Warwickshire Libraries, Brunswick Hub, Christians Against Poverty and Age UK Coventry and Warwickshire.

There was also a presentation from Transforming Communities Together on Warwick's 'Warm Rooms' initiative - where 10 frontline organisations within the CV34 postcode area are working together to deliver Warm Rooms. Mapping is being done to identify gaps, with a view to filling those gaps, and they are engaging local community groups and businesses in the scheme. There are hopes that there will also be a coordinated 'Warm Rooms' approach in Kenilworth, Leamington and Whitnash.

There were two breakout sessions as part of the event, where organisations worked with facilitators to share their challenges and concerns around the cost of living crisis, both for their own organisations' perspectives and the communities and individuals they help.

Main concerns were capacity of the sector to respond to the cost of living crisis, lack of volunteers and volunteer time, increased running costs, staff burnout and the impact on their own wellbeing, food provision/food banks running low on food, digital poverty, working poor (times/dates of services not suitable to those who work), the sustainability of initiatives (particularly those reliant on funding) and not overloading services.

Some of the opportunities identified were peer networks, encouraging long-term lifestyle changes in communities and in people's behaviour, mobile provision to where it is needed most and approaching local businesses and improving relationships with the business sector, for instance around transport schemes.

Working together to find solutions, those groups present identified partnership funding and joint bids, using libraries as central hubs, funding for core rather than project costs, having a library loan service for household equipment e.g. slow cookers, spreading best practice and having a 'one stop shop' approach rather than multiple referrals.

The event ended with a summary session with a view to relaunching the Warwick District Poverty Forum as the Warwick District Community Alliance, with meetings and events themed according to current priorities. There will also be ongoing communications and updates on cost of living issues, including Warwick District Council's Cost of Living Action Plan and further networking and events will be explored for the New Year

Stratford-on-Avon District - Rosebird Community Association

The Community

Rosebird Community Hall was built in the early 2010s as part of an out-of-town shopping development to the south of Stratford-upon-Avon. A wide variety of groups make use of the hall and is run day to day by an enthusiastic group of local residents.

The Challenge

By 2022 the 10-year 106 agreement which enabled the facility to be built and offered rent free was coming to an end. This meant not only an increase in rent but also a requirement for the lease to be taken on by the resident's group to safeguard the future of the hall.

Meeting the Challenge

WCAVA met the Chair of the residents' group in March 2022 and discussed the challenges faced by the group. A key issue was that the group was not incorporated and therefore committee members were personally liable for contracts and debts.

As a result of this WCAVA worked with a representative of the residents to guide the set up of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which was registered by the Charity Commission in December 2022. This enabled the group to become incorporated and no longer personally liable.

Subsequently, WCAVA ran an online induction workshop for the trustees on the role and requirements of being a charity trustee. As their Chair has stated:

“Thank you so much WCAVA for informative and relaxed session helping us to set up as a charity. I came into it thinking 'I don't even know what I don't know', now I have a to-do list and signposting to support for each activity. A big step forward, your help is much appreciated.”

Since then, WCAVA has also linked the trustees to a facility group in Stratford-upon-Avon which was restarting after COVID and shared information and best practice. This led to an offer from Foundation House run by the Town Trust to meet and see what help they could also provide.

The outcome

- the Rosebird Community Hall future is now more secure;
- the group is now incorporated with the reduction in personal liability that brings;
- trustees are aware of trustee roles and responsibilities; and
- Rosebird Community Association is now linked to the Stratford upon Avon Facility Group.