Better Together VCS Forum – 14 October 2022

# Action Notes

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| Agenda Item | Key Issues | Actions | Responsibility |
| **Welcome & introductions** | Kate Burrows welcomed everyone to Durham Community Action’s offices. Introductions were made. 16 people participated.  Apologies were received from: Hannah Johnson - Alzheimer’s Society; Joanne Appleby - OASES (North East Environment Network); Tracy Shutt - Cruise; Helen Mulhern - Investing in Children; Gail McGee – Healthwatch; Edward Pickering – Citizens Advice; Jenni Wood - DCCS |  |  |
| **Winter Response and Warm Spaces Discussion** | Kate set the scene for a discussion about the effects of the Cost of living crisis on both beneficiaries and our own workforces and volunteers.  Robyn Holmes gave an overview of some of the ways in which Age UK County Durham are responding and said that this is likely to be a challenge for the next 3-4 years. They are particularly focusing on the hidden vulnerable, the frail and the geographically isolated. She emphasised that it is essential to work with others to share resources and collaborate.  Age UK(CD) has seen a 233% increase in the number of calls from those aged 70-85 years requesting help with costs.  She gave examples of working with the Colleges, Clubs and Supermarkets to provide hot meals and a menu of activities, encouraging intergenerational interaction where appropriate, and emphasised that there is no additional finance to support these initiatives.  There is a need for Countywide services which are consistent, accessible, and sustainable – but who pays and is this to become a permanent relief service?  Naomi Stevens provided information about the [Warm Spaces Fund](https://www.cdcf.org.uk/grants-for-groups/warm-spaces-fund/) being administered by CDCF. Grants of £1K are available for community groups to enhance existing activities or provide incentive for new warm spaces this winter.  Groups will be expected to sign up to the Warm Spaces Charter which will advertise their free space as warm, welcoming, safe and where access to help and support can be obtained.  Naomi also highlighted the two Poverty Hurts Grants of £2K and £10K and the Organisational Sustainability grants of £5K and £20K.  For information on all grant programmes visit: <https://www.cdcf.org.uk/grants-for-groups/>  Mary Readman gave an overview of the support available from the Council.  £100K has been contributed to the [Warm Spaces Fund](https://www.cdcf.org.uk/grants-for-groups/warm-spaces-fund/). Libraries are to be part of this initiative and residents will be able to access a directory of all registered Warm Spaces via [Durham Locate](https://www.durhamlocate.org.uk/) Further information on the warm spaces network can be found here: [Warm spaces - Durham County Council](https://www.durham.gov.uk/warmspaces) or for info about the Charter or to register email: [warmspaces@durham.gov.uk](mailto:warmspaces@durham.gov.uk) To obtain leaflets about Warm Spaces email: [WarmSpacesComms@durham.gov.uk](mailto:WarmSpacesComms@durham.gov.uk)  The council has recently received a further allocation of £4.6m from the Government’s [Household Support Fund](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/26603/Household-Support-Fund-HSF-). This will be used to support residents until 31 March 2023.  Applications for the [council tax energy rebate](https://www.durham.gov.uk/counciltaxenergyrebate) payment have now closed. However, many households who receive Council Tax Reduction have not yet applied for the rebate. Where this is the case, their council tax account has been credited with £150. Any household that has not yet applied for this support can contact the customer services team on 03000 26 0000 or by emailing [help@durham.gov.uk](mailto:help@durham.gov.uk)  See separate PDF Leaflet about Finding financial help and support which can be distributed to your staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries.  Discussion  A wide-ranging discussion followed, highlighting the importance of campaigning, the links between poverty and health and the need for investment. It was recognised that there had been an increase in people with suicidal thoughts, and evidence of the detrimental impact that hospital waiting times is having on low-income households. There is a general ‘poverty of resilience’ and likely to be an increase in homelessness. It was suggested that the VCS initiate a meeting with all six of the Constituency MPs covering County Durham.  Kate summarised the discussion by reflecting that the members of Better Together were likeminded and all facing similar issues, there is an appetite to work together and make sure that we are all connected. She urged organisations to keep feeding in intelligence to help build a realistic picture of the challenges being faced and opportunities to address these. Intelligence is being fed via [VONNE](https://www.vonne.org.uk/) to [NAVCA](https://navca.org.uk/) and [NCVO](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/)  Peter MacLellan reminded members that Energy Grants for those not on pre-payment meters are available. Also, that any organisations wishing to buy food in bulk to contact him: [peter@durhamcp.org.uk](mailto:peter@durhamcp.org.uk)  Carol Gaskarth spoke about the development of a Poverty & Health Alliance. PCP had been granted a £50K lottery development grant to look at what an alliance might look like and what system change would we like to see. A phase 2 application must be completed by the new year. | 1. See Financial Help Leaflet for distribution to staff, volunteers and beneficiaries 2. Arrange VCSE meeting with MP’s 3. Feed in intelligence on impact of Cost of Living Crisis to DCA | All  KB/IHS  All |
| **Kooth & Quell – Mental Health Resources** | Jemma Austin, [Kooth](https://www.koothplc.com/) Engagement Lead, County Durham, Sunderland &  South Tyneside, was unable to attend. Please see separate email about 'Cost of Living & Mental Health' webinar taking place on 2nd November at 10:00 to 11:00am or 3rd November at 3:30 to 4:30pm Book you free places here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/429113569237> | 1. 'Cost of Living & Mental Health' webinar – Book your place. | All |
| **Partnerships Update** | * Safeguarding   Abby Thompson reminded members that she is the main VCS Safeguarding link to the two Safeguarding Boards [Safeguarding Adults](http://www.safeguardingdurhamadults.info/) [Safeguarding Children](https://durham-scp.org.uk/)  The Safeguarding Children’s Board are undergoing some structural changes with the introduction of an Improvement & Delivery group and a Performance & Learning Group.  There are to be two Safeguarding Weeks beginning 14th November for Children and W/b 21st November for Adults.  DCA are planning to produce a podcast about safeguarding and welcome anyone willing to share examples of good practice or lessons learned from experience.  Contact: [Abby.Thompson@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](mailto:Abby.Thompson@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk)  The Safeguarding Adults Board are currently working on Healthy Workplace Cultures. The Volunteering Kite Mark will also be including this in their assessments for accreditation.  Abby reminded members that A Community Prevent Event for the VCS on Countering Terrorism takes place on Tuesday 18th October at Bowburn Community Centre.  DCA Website is being renewed and will be refreshing the dedicated Safeguarding page. Any resources or quick references which members would find particularly useful for inclusion please let Abby know.  DCA are to deliver Cyber Security Training linked into a programme through NAVCA with access to resources.  Abby reminded members about the free support available to VCS employees from PAM Assist. **Website** [**www.pamassist.co.uk**](http://www.pamassist.co.uk)  **Client Username: countydurhameap**  **Client Password: countydurhameap1**  **24hr Freephone number 0808 196 3863**  DCA can also offer any support to Management Teams through informal supervision and have developed this with Cornforth Partnership.   * [County Durham Partnership](https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/)   The next meeting of the Board is on 9th November. The CDP Conference will be on Wednesday 30th November. | 1. Volunteers to share Safeguarding practice for podcasts 2. Ideas welcome for DCA Safeguarding web page | All  All |
| **Information Sharing** | Members were given the opportunity to share any information.   * Resilient Communities Group   Carol Gaskarth reported that this group is undergoing a reset, though the two Task & Finish Groups: Workforce Leads and Reducing Stigma and Discrimination will continue. |  |  |
| **Date of Next Meeting** | The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday 6th December 1.30-3.30pm**. at Durham Community Action 9 St Stephen’s Court, Low Willington, DL15 0BF |  |  |