Better Together VCS Forum – 8 April 2022 via Microsoft Teams

# Action Notes

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| Agenda Item | Key Issues | Actions | Responsibility |
| **Welcome & introductions** | Jo Laverick welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of the Better Together Forum and introductions were made. 17 people participated. Apologies were received from Emma Crawford-Moore - Family Action; Rachel Smith - Family Action; Jenni Wood - Durham County Carers Support; Tracy Shutt - Cruse Bereavement Care; Trevor Atkinson – DASH; Grace Crawford - UTASS |   |  |
| **Developing approaches to engagement in the new NHS / ICS arrangements** | Rachael Stray, Communications and Engagement Manager at County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, delivered a presentation about [Developing regional NHS approaches to Public Engagement.](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/Developing%20Regional%20NHS%20Approaches%20to%20Engagement%20-%20ICS%20PP%20220222.pptx)She emphasised that the new [Integrated Care System](https://countydurhamccg.nhs.uk/about-us/ics-icp/) for the North East and North Cumbria will be the largest in the country (geographically the size of Wales!) with very varied populations, health needs and inequalities.The engagement strategy is being co-produced involving people every step of the way.In the discussion which followed some key points were made including:* The importance of listening to people with lived experience
* The VCS can’t do things for nothing – need sensible conversations with commissioners (*This is being done through the Connector Model*)
* The language around place for the ICS is larger than the very local
* The need to appreciate the time it takes for VCS to engage properly
* Local approach to grant giving needed rather than just commissioning – this can make a real difference – low level place based preventative work.
* Useful for Commissioners to engage with the North East Funders Network
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| **Advice in County Durham – New Referral Portal** | Sam Scotchbrook, Partnership Support Officer for [AICD](http://adviceincountydurham.org.uk/), delivered a presentation about the [Development of the new AICD Referral Portal](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/AICD%20Presentation%20-BTF.pptx) which is currently being tested and due to go live in May. An AICD Networking event will take place in June and a conference is being planned for September. |  |  |
| **Econ-versation – Developing an Inclusive Economy for County Durham** | To introduce the topic, Peter MacLellan, delivered a brief presentation with his personal reflections: [Towards an Inclusive Economy](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/Towards%20an%20Inclusive%20Economy.pptx). He based his thoughts on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and concluded that “An Inclusive Economy is one where it is not acceptable to leave anyone behind. Where the disadvantaged economically, socially, educationally or through ill health or infirmity are supported and included.”Mara Thompson, Consultation & Engagement Team Leader, then provided an overview of the [Development of an Inclusive Economic Strategy for County Durham.](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/Our%20Big%20Econ-versation%20Presentation%20%28Standard%29.pptx) The strategy has not yet been written but will be informed by all the responses received as part of the [Big Econ-versation](http://www.durhamecon-versation.co.uk/) which runs until 22nd April.All members of Better Together are encouraged to respond. In addition, Jo will draw up a generic VCS response to feed into the consultation. | 1. All encouraged to contribute individually to the [Big Econ-versation](http://www.durhamecon-versation.co.uk/) and encourage their colleagues and beneficiaries to do the same.
2. VCS generic response paper to be drawn up.
 | AllJo Laverick |
| **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/)Other VCS organisations on the boards include Age UK; Durham County Careers Support; Moving On; and Investing in Children. Better Together is key to safeguarding promotion and feedback Contact Abby.Thompson@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk with any issues.The Safer Culture NE Partnership training is ending but DCA will continue to offer free training for trustees and Volunteers. See [DCA website](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/safeguarding.html) for details.Abby highlighted the importance of being alert to safeguarding issues, people trafficking and modern slavery when Ukrainian refugees are seeking sanctuary in the UK.* [County Durham Partnership](https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/)

The Board met on 24th March items included: Transition to living with Covid; Review of Community Engagement and AAPs to be carried out by external consultant; Ukrainian Refugee support.* Connector Model update

Work ongoing around health & wellbeing funding aligning with commissioning needs* VCS Update

Common issues identified around difficulties with recruitment and workforce development; weariness; capacity to deliver for frontline groups.Please let Jo/DCA know if you identify any opportunities or have ideas. |  |  |
| **Information Sharing** | Members had the opportunity to share information this included a reminder of the increase in the [Household Support Fund](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/26603/Household-Support-Fund-HSF-) to help vulnerable households stay warm, have food on the table, and have access to other essential household items this is administered by the Local Authority; Durham Christian Partnership will be able to distribute fuel Vouchers more widely through the foodbanks.Members were made aware that Margaret Vaughan is moving from County Durham Community Foundation at the end of June to take up active ‘modern retirement’. Jo thanked her for the huge contribution she has made to the sector and to this forum during her time with CDCF. |  |  |
| **Date of Next Meeting** | **14th June 1.30 pm** at Durham Community Action, 9 St Stephen’s Court, Low Willington, County Durham DL15 0BF |  |  |