Better Together VCS Forum – 8 February 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 Carol Gaskarth, PCP; Joanne Appleby, OASES  Denise Alexander, Healthwatch; Julie Cane, Home Group; Emma Crawford-Moore, Family Action; Lesley-Anne Kirk, Northern Rights; Hannah Johnson, Alzheimer’s Society; Rachel Smith, Family Action; Abby Thompson, Durham Community Action; Joanne Thorns, NECAT |  |  |
| **DASH running well! - Local Demand and Response to Homelessness** | Trevor Atkinson, Director of [DASH](http://www.dashorg.co.uk/), gave a verbal presentation about the organisation which has been supporting homeless people in Durham for 50 years (34 as a registered charity). With 18 F/T & P/T staff plus volunteers they provide housing accommodation for c 50 people with 690 referrals in 2021.  He highlighted the increase in hidden homelessness which had been uncovered by the pandemic. To future proof the service DASH is now a registered provider of Social Housing through their trading arm [Keepier Homes](https://www.dashorg.co.uk/kepier-homes/) – providing affordable units for people on low incomes. |  |  |
| **Moving On - Housing support for vulnerable young people – Current Trends** | Peter Richards, CEO of [Moving On](https://movingondurham.org.uk/), gave a presentation on being [Young and Homeless in 2021](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/Young%20and%20Homeless%202021.pptx) and what Moving On do to support them. He highlighted some key issues and statistics, considered why these are important and identified some assumptions including the impact of austerity and the pandemic. He concluded with a consideration of County Durham issues and opportunities.  In discussion the need for specialist mental health support was highlighted and the need to articulate a demarcation between what the VCS can and do cope with and when more specialist professional help is needed. |  |  |
| **Cornforth Partnership – Working with victims of Domestic Violence** | Tony Cutmore, CEO of the [Cornforth Partnership](https://cornforthpartnership.org/) gave a [presentation](https://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/public/dca/www/uploads/files/Cornforth%20Partnership%20Better%20Together%20Presentation.pptx) about how they aim to provide the right support in the right place at the right time to enable the development of healthy vibrant and aspirational communities. He then focussed on how they seek to support female survivors and victims of domestic abuse, and how they utilise the [Empowerment Outcome Star](https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/empowerment-star/) to measure client success. Finally, he shared future plans for the service including working towards the [Leading Lights Quality Standard](https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-domestic-abuse-and-idva-service-managers/leading-lights). |  |  |
| **Partnerships Update** | * [County Durham Partnership](https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/)   Jo provided information from the recent CDP meeting including emphasising, as part of the [City of Culture Bid](https://durham2025.co.uk/), the importance of a culture of resilience and place in the county as demonstrated by the rise of mutual aid groups in response to the pandemic and their continued use in response to the recent storms. Local Resilience Plans are being developed to help us respond to future emergencies.  Encouragement was given to join the [Big Econ-versation](https://durhamecon-versation.co.uk/) which will help in developing an [inclusive economic strategy](https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/26679/Creating-an-inclusive-economic-strategy-for-County-Durham-) for the county. A special meeting of Better Together will be held on Tuesday 16th March at 1.30 to consider what social and community infrastructure is necessary for an inclusive economy.   * [Integrated Care System](https://countydurhamccg.nhs.uk/about-us/ics-icp/)   Jo informed members present that the date for the demise of the CCG has been moved back to July 2022. A new CEO has been appointed for the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care System (ICS). DCA are representing the sector in finding out about changes and plans. They are also keeping an eye on rural proofing. The ICS are wanting to test a grant scheme for individual grants for people with mental health needs. Ideas about how this might work are being sought.   * Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLW)   Many are now returning to their substantive posts and there are new link workers for Primary Care Networks (PCNs). There is an informal professional network meeting taking place on 16th February. Contact [susan.garrett@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](mailto:susan.garrett@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk) for further information.   * [AICD](http://adviceincountydurham.org.uk/)   The new advice portal is due to be launched in March. Organisations are requested to upload their information on to the new referral portal. Citizens Advice have been awarded a 3 year Lottery Grant to develop AICD including staffing resources.   * Safeguarding   Members were reminded of the importance of being alert to safeguarding issues as we emerge from the pandemic and that Abby Thompson is the VCS Safeguarding link to the Safeguarding Boards.  Contact [Abby.Thompson@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](mailto:Abby.Thompson@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk) | 1. Focus Group for VCS contribution to the Big Econ -versation Tuesday 16th March 1.30 2. Ideas for grant scheme for individuals with mental health needs – contact Jo [joanna.laverick@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](mailto:joanna.laverick@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk) | All  All |
| **Information Sharing** | Members had an opportunity to give brief updates.  Peter Richards drew attention to the [Leaders in Safeguarding](https://www.leadersinsafeguarding.com/) Quality Standard which Moving on has recently achieved. |  |  |
| **Date of Next Meeting** | **Friday 8th April Policy Conference** |  |  |