



Towards a Voluntary and Community Sector Consortium

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Worcestershire Social Economic Inclusion Consortium supported by Worcestershire LEP. It will keep you up-to-date with the work we are doing together across the Worcestershire Voluntary and Community Sector in partnership with businesses and public sector interests.

On 31st March 2014, the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) submitted its Strategic Economic Plan to Government. Within the plan, a proposal is included to establish a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Consortium to lead work on delivering Social and Economic Inclusion. This activity will be supported through the WLEP, with a combined investment of £11.7m during 2014-2020 from European Social Fund matched by Big Lottery Fund, DWP, Skills Funding Agency, public organisations and businesses. The Consortium and WLEP are working collaboratively with Cabinet Office, BLF, DWP and SFA who are united behind Worcestershire's innovative approach.

The prime purpose of the Consortium will be to provide co-ordinated support to help working age people (including school leavers) who are 'trapped' in a cycle of unemployment or low paid temporary jobs or generally excluded from economic opportunity. The aim is to ensure all people both contribute to and benefit from, the growth in Worcestershire Economy, whatever their specific needs. The Consortium proposal emerged after a series of workshops held in Autumn 2013 to Spring 2014. This work identified:

- The important role the VCS can play in ensuring growth benefits everyone in Worcestershire;
- A fragmentation of services for those with multiple needs or disadvantage and a need to 'join things up' to improve services;
- The importance of working together to minimise back office costs and deliver maximum benefits to those it works to help; and
- The ability of VCS to work with and involve the people they are helping in developing solutions and new services.
- the connections and contributions that other local-to-national programmes, whether from businesses or public sector, can add to the Consortium

The members of Worcestershire VCS also recognised that the WLEP does not have the capacity to manage multiple projects and bids from several VCS organisations. They concluded that the VCS need to work together to ensure they don't miss opportunities to access funds and support delivery of this key activity. The Consortium will see the Worcestershire VCS working with businesses and public bodies for the WLEP to create a single point of contact to access funds and work with key government departments such as Department of Work and Pensions, Big Lottery Fund and the Skills Funding Agency. This will benefit long term unemployed, those in temporary low paid work or in need of access to skills training and development.

MOVING FORWARD

A Shadow Board has been established to take this work forward. It is made up of members from across the VCS and with key partners from other sectors. Together they will:

- Oversee the development of a Delivery Plan that sets out how the Consortium will operate;
- Detail how they will involve the wider membership of VCS;
- Set out the activities the Consortium will commission,
- Make sure services are of high quality; and set out how those using the service are involved.

WHO'S ON THE SHADOW BOARD

Simon Murphy, Interim Chief Executive Officer for Worcester Community Trust, will lead the Shadow Board. Simon has a wealth of experience in working with VCS organisations and managing European Funds. Other shadow board members are:

Clare Huyton	Executive Director, Fortis Living
Sam Pratley	Managing Director, West Mercia Homes
Richard Quallington	Chief Executive, Community First
Kate Harvey	Chief Executive, Onside Advocacy
Matt Home	Director, Willowdene Care Farm
Kim Cook	Executive Officer, Worcestershire Training Provider Association
Hannah Needham	Strategic Commissioner, Early Help and Partnerships, Worcestershire County Council
Richard Nicol	Chief Executive, The Together Group
Peter Jordan	Service Manager, Employment and Reablement Services Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
Margaret Gray	Director, MRE Unlocking Enterprise
Katy Boom	Director, Environmental Sustainability, University of Worcester
Claire Bridges	Strategy and Partnership Executive, Worcestershire LEP

All the work will be supported by Nick Parker and Vikki Greenfield from Vestia Community Trust. You can find out more about the Consortium and its activities and other information at <http://www.wlep.co.uk/about/about-wlep/strategic-objectives/social-economic-inclusion/>

WHAT NEXT?

Over the next few months the WLEP and Shadow Board will be working to:

- Map out the needs for help;
- Identify what services are already in place;
- Find out what those needing help to be 'socially and economic included' actually want; and
- Identify any gaps in support.

This information will shape plans for investment of the European Social Funds. If you would like to help in this work, please get in touch.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Over the next few months we will be taking to the road to share more information on the WLEP and Consortium and our plans for the future. If you have been passed this e-briefing from a third party and would like to be on our mailing list for future briefings or if you can host a briefing with a local network of interested VCS and other organisations, please email seiconsortium@wlep.co.uk and tell us:

- Venue details;
- Who will attend; and
- Suggested dates and times.



Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership