

# Bucks Voluntary and Community Sector News

## Welcome

...to the third issue of the Bucks VCS News, produced by the public sector organisations in Buckinghamshire. There have been huge changes for all of us since the last edition, with the launch of the Big Society and the prospect of radical spending cuts over the next three years.

There are major challenges ahead. But radical change can create opportunities for new and innovative ways of working. Charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises have a critical role to play in public service reform, community empowerment and social action, the three streams of the Big Society. This can't happen without support however and we'll be consulting on the future of voluntary sector support services over the next few months (see page 2).

We know that there's a lot of inspirational work happening within communities across the county. Bringing organisations together to identify, share and discuss good practice and develop new ideas can bring real benefits for both us and the communities we serve.

To help this happen we're launching a Buckinghamshire Big Society network, an informal network of organisations that will operate mainly through email and online discussion forums with occasional workshops, focus groups and other opportunities to get together.

The group will also provide you with an opportunity to influence some of the key decision makers in the public sector across the county.

If you're interested in taking part please contact us at [info@communityimpactbucks.org.uk](mailto:info@communityimpactbucks.org.uk).

## Budget Update

The next three years are set to be very challenging for all public sector organisations. While the focus is on protecting the frontline where possible, service reductions and efficiency savings will have a significant impact on residents and communities.

In recognising the valuable work of the sector both the county and district councils have prioritised protecting funding to the VCS and reductions to grants budgets have been minimised.

Changes to how specific services are purchased will impact on some existing providers however. A number of important national funding streams are also reducing or ending (for example Positive Activities for Young People) which will have wider implications for the sector in Buckinghamshire.

We're also aware that reductions in some of the councils' own services may increase demand on the VCS. This is essential information for us to know, both to understand the impact of current changes and to inform future decision making. Please contact us at [vcs@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@buckscc.gov.uk) if you have any evidence you can contribute.

Further information on the County Council's budget reductions are detailed in the 2011-12 Budget Equality Impact Assessment, available at <http://tinyurl.com/EIA2011>.

**This will be the last issue of the VCS News that we produce in hard copy.** If you don't currently receive the newsletter by email and would like to, please contact [vcs@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@buckscc.gov.uk).



## Consultation on the future of VCS Support Services

Can you help us identify the right priorities for support services to frontline organisations? The County and District Councils are consulting on the future of support services for VCS organisations in Buckinghamshire and we welcome your input.

These services are currently provided by Community Impact Bucks and focus on information and advice on a range of topics, training and development, Volunteer Centre services, promotion and representation and support for community led appraisals (previously called Parish Plans in rural areas).

The landscape for the VCS has changed significantly since the original contract specification was agreed in 2006. Looking forward between now and 2015 what kind of support will you need to achieve success in your organisation? What services do you most value and where are the gaps? What sources of support do you currently use?

We want to make sure that future support services are fit for purpose and of real benefit to local groups – if we're going to get this right we'll need your help. Further details are available from the County Council's VCS Hub at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/VCSHub](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/VCSHub).

To find out more about Community Impact Bucks' services, please visit [www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk](http://www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk).

## Community Payback – how can it help you?

In an average year, free labour worth almost £1.5m is carried out by offenders sentenced to Community Payback by the courts in Thames Valley.

In Buckinghamshire, local communities, voluntary groups and charitable organisations benefit from about 100,000 hours of this unpaid work every year.

Much of the work has a regeneration aspect – bringing derelict areas and buildings back into public use; clearing churchyards, country streams and unused allotments; repairing park benches and playground equipment. Some of the projects are relatively small; others, such as turning a derelict piece of land into a garden, stretch over several years.

Charities and voluntary groups can benefit greatly from Community Payback. Not only is it a means to get a piece of work done you couldn't otherwise afford to do, but it opens up partnership opportunities with Thames Valley Probation too.



More and more of the Community Payback projects undertaken are done with joint supervision by Thames Valley Probation staff and volunteers (often working for charities). It can be very beneficial to have volunteers working alongside the offenders, showing them new skills in areas like conservation or repairing things. Even teaching someone how to organise clothes and goods in a charity shop, how to deal with the public and how to improve social and communication skills is rewarding to both sides.



If you think your organisation would benefit from Community Payback help, please take a look at <http://tinyurl.com/CommunityPayback>. You'll find three short videos (only 2 minutes each), which explain everything you need to know about Community Payback and how to get involved.



# AVDC Roundup

## Funding information

AVDC's Community Engagement Officer regularly emails groups with information about new funds and relevant support to the sector. If you do voluntary work in the Vale and would like to receive this sort of information please send the name of your organisation, your name and your email address to [lmaddocks@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk](mailto:lmaddocks@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk) and state in one sentence what the main work of your group is, so that you can be sent the most relevant information.

## Training

AVDC has opened up its in-house training programme for staff to the voluntary sector. This is at the subsidised rate of £80. There is also a last minute rate of £35 for those willing to fill the place of last minute cancellations from booked courses. For further details please contact [vhoare@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk](mailto:vhoare@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk).

## Website

Information about the support and advice we can provide to the community and voluntary sector is available from our revised web pages at <http://tinyurl.com/AVDC-VCS>.

## Funding Fair

AVDC organised a county wide funding fair in February which was free to all due to sponsorship by AVDC, BCC, CDC, WDC and Bucks Community Foundation. There were 16 funders who saw over 200 people in open sessions. 182 community and voluntary groups took advantage of this opportunity to speak directly with potential funders.

In addition there were 5 talks covering a range of subjects around fundraising and sustainability. **Do let us know if you have gained funds as a result of being at the Fair.** Please contact [lmaddocks@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk](mailto:lmaddocks@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk).



## Grants

AVDC gave an astounding £700,000 to the community and voluntary sector in 2009/10. In addition the Community Chest, joint funding between AVDC and the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, gave £457,000. For more information about either of these funds contact [grants@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk](mailto:grants@aylesburyvalcdc.gov.uk).

## Fundraising Training

AVDC ran a series of 8 training sessions around the topic of fundraising from Sept 2010 to March 2011. Of the groups that participated to date 13 out of 67 were from outside the Vale.

## WDC Community Support Grants

Wycombe District Council welcomes applications for Community Support Grants in the arts, sports and wide-ranging community focussed work. These grants support short term projects, activities or events which can make a real difference in helping local people to get the most out of their communities and environment and contributing to the local communities in positive ways.

The community support grants are run on a rolling programme and decisions are made within 6 weeks of receipt of applications. Information can be accessed via the Council's website [www.wycombe.gov.uk](http://www.wycombe.gov.uk), by calling the Grants Officer on 01494 421424 or by emailing [grants@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:grants@wycombe.gov.uk).

## CDC Community Support Grants

Chiltern District Council has opened its annual Community Grants supporting community participation and the Big Society. These grants support short term projects, activities or events which can make a real difference in helping local people to get the most out of their communities and environment and contributing to the local communities in positive ways.

Decisions are made within 12 weeks of receipt of applications.

Information can be accessed via the Council's website [www.chiltern.gov.uk](http://www.chiltern.gov.uk), by calling the Community Team on 01494 732013 or by emailing [housingandcommunity@chiltern.gov.uk](mailto:housingandcommunity@chiltern.gov.uk)



## Free fire safety checks

Voluntary and Community Organisations are being asked to encourage their service users to take advantage of free safety checks offered by Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The checks aim to help reduce the risk of a fire or other emergency in people's homes. Free smoke alarms are fitted where required, and firefighters will also help residents find out more about other useful local services.

The checks take about 30 minutes each, depending on the size of the house. The householder needs to be present to answer a few questions.

Firefighters will offer fire safety advice, based on any potential fire risks that they may have identified during the check, and answer questions.

They will then fit as many smoke alarms as they think necessary. These are alarms with a sealed battery that should last 10 years in normal use.

To find out more or to book a free check, ring 01296 744477 or email [cs@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:cs@bucksfire.gov.uk).

## A new Compact for Buckinghamshire

In December 2010 a new national Compact (the agreement which governs relations between the Government and the voluntary and community sector) was published by the Office for Civil Society and Compact Voice. The new Compact is shorter and more focused and is backed up by a set of accountability and transparency measures.

The Buckinghamshire Compact Steering Group is now proposing to replace the current Buckinghamshire Compact (produced in 2004) with the new national document and its' accompanying Accountability and Transparency Guide.

Organisations that signed up to the original Compact are being asked their views on the proposal at the moment. If you have an opinion on whether the national Compact should be adopted locally or have any other feedback on how the Compact is working in Buckinghamshire please let us know via [vcs@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@buckscc.gov.uk).

Information on the Buckinghamshire Compact is available from [www.bucksinfo.net/buckscompact/](http://www.bucksinfo.net/buckscompact/). The national document is available at <http://tinyurl.com/National-Compact>.

## Improved Consultation

Buckinghamshire County Council's "Community Consultation Portal" now provides access to all consultations being done by:

**Aylesbury Vale District Council**  
**Buckinghamshire County Council**  
**Bucks NHS**  
**Chiltern District Council**  
**Thames Valley Police**  
**Wycombe District Council**

The portal provides a database of consultations taking place, a way of doing online surveys and easier analysis of results. Please visit the "Have Your Say" pages at <http://tinyurl.com/BCCHaveYourSay>.

## Useful Contacts

Aylesbury Vale District Council	<a href="mailto:grants@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk">grants@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk</a>	01296 585186
Buckinghamshire County Council	<a href="mailto:vcs@buckscc.gov.uk">vcs@buckscc.gov.uk</a>	01296 383869
Chiltern District Council	<a href="mailto:housingandcommunity@chiltern.gov.uk">housingandcommunity@chiltern.gov.uk</a>	01494 732013
South Bucks District Council	<a href="mailto:sbdc@southbucks.gov.uk">sbdc@southbucks.gov.uk</a>	01895 837200
Wycombe District Council	<a href="mailto:grants@wycombe.gov.uk">grants@wycombe.gov.uk</a>	01494 421424
Community Impact Bucks	<a href="mailto:info@communityimpactbucks.org.uk">info@communityimpactbucks.org.uk</a>	0845 3890389
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