



Northamptonshire Voluntary and Community Sector Forum

Introduction and background

Voluntary impact Northamptonshire works with frontline voluntary and community organisations and other specialist organisations to represent the voluntary sector and ensure that its voice is heard and can influence policy and practice in Northamptonshire.

Voluntary and community organisations, charities and social enterprises have a significant social and economic impact. The breadth of services and activities offered by voluntary sector organisations is wide.

As a sector we want to influence decision makers, councils, funders, government departments and policy make improvements for the people and communities the sector works with and to make the voluntary sector itself more sustainable.

Although VIN and other representatives sit on various bodies and boards across the county representing the sector; a wider countywide forum of representatives from different geographical and thematic areas would mean we would:

- Provide a voice for the sector at a strategic level within the county and an effective mechanism for members to discuss key issues.
- Have a greater understanding of the issues affecting our local communities
- Have a single collective voice - which will strengthen our ability to influence
- Enable the sector to be better represented
- Promote opportunities for wider collaborations and partnerships

The model

The Northamptonshire VCS countywide forum will be made up of

“geographical” representatives; we know there are lots of people and organisations that work locally and have a huge amount of local knowledge we want to embrace

and utilise this knowledge and local networks. We aim to have 7 representatives. 1 from each borough/ district in the county.

“Thematic” representatives; we recognise that many organisations work across districts and wider, often with a specific target audience.

- Arts culture and heritage
- Advice and advocacy
- Crime and community safety
- Health and wellbeing
- Health and wellbeing - families and children
- Environment
- Housing and homelessness
- Equalities

Vision

By informing, engaging with, coordinating and championing the views of the voluntary and community sector, Northamptonshire VCS countywide forum will provide an inclusive, independent and influential voice with our public sector partners and strategic partnerships to shape and respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the sector.

Aim

To increase and strengthen the collective voice of the community and voluntary sector in influencing and shaping decisions that are important to the sector in Northamptonshire.

Objectives

1. Provide a structure and mechanisms for effective communication and engagement.
2. Provide opportunities for mutual support and learning to build the sector from within.
3. Provide effective communication and engagement, coordination and improved working relationships with the public and private sectors.
4. Ensure that the collective views of the VCS have influence on planning and policy decisions in Northamptonshire
5. Provide leadership for the collective voice of the VCS.
6. Promote and raise awareness of the forum to contribute to improving unity within the sector.

7. To improve working relationships between VCS and public and private sectors.

Outcomes

There will be a set of outcomes that will measure the achievement of objectives, including the following measures.

- The VCS is represented and is influencing planning, policy making and service delivery at strategic levels as a result of infrastructure support activities.
- There is information and intelligence sharing, partnership working and collaboration between VCS organisations and the private and public sector.
- The VCS in Northamptonshire has a collective profile and presence.
- The VCS in Northamptonshire is better informed.
- Sectors work together better to achieve best outcomes for individuals and communities in Northamptonshire.

The role of VIN

As the countywide infrastructure organisation Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire aim to provide leadership to the VCS.

We want to

- ensure strategic decisions are influenced by the local VCS
- Build the capacity and resilience of the VCS and highlight to all that we are well placed to respond to the community's needs.

We believe that having a forum of representatives from the local voluntary and community sector is a good way of achieving these aims.

In support of the forum VIN will:

- Attend the representative group meetings to feed in updates from the strategic meetings and groups we attend on behalf of the VCS.
- Support the development of representatives including the provision of training.
- Provide secretariat support to the forum, which will include the organisation of meetings.
- Communication is key to the success of the forum; VIN will create and deliver a publicity and communications plan for the forum that will include a web page linked to www.voluntaryimpact.org.uk
- This activity is currently unfunded; we will seek grant funding to support the on-going costs of the forum.

Engagement with the VCS

Voluntary Impact attended local forums in spring 2016 to engage with the VCS and seek views on the proposed model, following this we held 2 task and finish groups meetings that clarified outstanding points.

We are now seeking nominations for representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector.

If you are interested in becoming a representative on the Northamptonshire VCS countywide forum please read the nominations guidance and complete a nominations form.

For additional information please contact.

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