



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS FORUM

Thursday 9 June 2022

2:00pm – 4:00pm

Chair: Angela Spence (AS)

Minutes taken by: Fenn Reynolds

1	Welcome and Introductions	ACTION
	<p>Following an open networking session, AS welcomed everybody to the meeting and ran through the agenda and meeting rules. A one minute silence was observed in remembrance of the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.</p> <p>Agenda</p>	
2	Training & Development needs in the sector discussion KCSC/RBKC	
	<p>Tom Richards (TR) highlighted the support that KCSC provides to organisations, focussed around building infrastructure systems. He asked organisations who required support to contact support@kcsc.org.uk.</p> <p>TR split members into five groups, for discussion of the following questions:</p> <p>Q1 – What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing your organisations?</p> <p>Q2 – What training and support could KCSC offer that would help overcome these challenges?</p> <p>Group One’s response noted that challenges were economic – things like increasing crime, pension poverty, fuel bills. Also, difficulty about engaging with marginalised communities and the reality that people are less likely to take up volunteering opportunities due to time and economic factors.</p> <p>In terms of overcoming that challenge, the group suggested utilising asset based community development, working with each other and learning how to work better and collaborate. Training on bid writing, fundraising and how to look after and retain volunteers through a toolkit.</p>	

	<p>Group 2 added recruitment generally being one of the main challenges. General safeguarding refreshers and managing difficult conversations training would be helpful.</p> <p>Group 3 said that there are far more complex families and cases popping up in work. Capacity and staffing were also seen as a challenge.</p> <p>In terms of opportunities, they highlighted the positives of digital working, and working over the phone. Training wise, policy updates and policy work, alongside alternative funding opportunities would be good.</p> <p>Group 4 said that their challenges included communication internally and externally and organisational approach to mental health. They noted mental health work for staff and service users is an opportunity to shape attitudes.</p> <p>Group 5 reiterated staffing, alongside low pay, part time work being often the only option for staffing. KCSC advice around recruitment, apprenticeships and information on local refugees, trauma informed approaches to practice, and training expanding to the South physically is needed.</p> <p>TR then went on to discuss key themes that came out of the training survey. These included managing staff wellbeing, inclusive recruitment, safeguarding and theories of change.</p> <p>Nada Sallam introduced K&C Together, which support local organisations looking to adopt new policies and practices for increasing service user engagement and diversifying the workforce. Information on this can be found here.</p> <p>This concluded this section.</p>	
3	<p>Presentation and Discussion on the Cost of Living crisis KCSC/RBKC</p>	
	<p>Presentation</p> <p>AS began by taking members through the slide deck. This included information from the FSI, particularly around how inflation rates vary between the poorest and richest, and around how energy prices effect the proportion of budgets. AS noted, the fact that five of the twenty five most deprived boroughs in England are in London, and that twenty seven percent of Londoners are living in poverty.</p> <p>AS handed over to Michael Kennedy (MK) of RBKC, to give more context in terms of Kensington and Chelsea specifically.</p>	

MK ran through a [slide deck](#). MK said that during lockdown there were 750 regular users of food banks in RBKC and that this figure has remained roughly the same. MK noted that the Cost of Living has remained a big issue. He noted the work that RBKC did with food providers to establish what other issues service users are facing. The main findings included mental and physical health issues, addiction, and social isolation.

MK said that there were seventeen different services in the council that are aimed at helping with poverty or cost of living. Half a million pounds has been added to the Cash First scheme for example. What RBKC are looking to do is join these seventeen services together to help people with cost of living.

MK wanted to work more on making sure people were aware of what benefits they can apply to and said that continuing to spreading information through the voluntary and community sector is key to this.

AS asked for a group discussion on the cost of living, specifically asking the questions:

Q1- What impact are you seeing from residents on a day to day basis?

Q2 – What are the concerns for the voluntary and community sector as a whole?

Q3 – What do you think needs to be addressed and how?

One attendee replied that an issue often raised was the feeling of powerlessness for people with all the changes happening around them – they feeling that as a community we are absorbing it and the situation is out of control. AS added that it may be about where the community want to find their own response in respect to social activism.

Another attendee spoke about the impact on families at the lower end – particularly around fuel increases, national insurance and taxes going up. The member wondered how much people can take before they ‘completely lose it’.

Another attendee added that shame and stigma around people coming forward for support is a big issue, and volunteers being asked to do more when even they are being stretched. Concerns for the whole VCS are that they’ve been patching up issues that are coming through, and the public sector has not been able to catch up.

Flexibility of grant criteria, for example criteria dependent on changing concerns and situations is suggested.

An attendee added that capacity issues are a big factor, and this effects trust and reliability around services. One suggestion would be more developed mapping or signposting tools, so that capacity isn’t squeezed by people being sent to the wrong places. AS brought attention to the [Self Care directory](#).

This drew this section to a close.

4	Food Coordination Programme Joe Batty (KCSC)	
	<p>Joe Batty (JB) began by running through key points of the Food Coordination Programme.</p> <p>RBKC is funding KCSC initially to help the voluntary and community sector to recruit for three roles (two part-time and one full-time coordinator) for a Food Coordination Programme.</p> <p>This is intended to knit together service such as foodbanks and advice services by creating a direct bridge between the council and these providers, and to spread information from service to service for people who are in poverty.</p> <p>Habitual service users of foodbanks would be linked to other services to address the complexity of the service users needs. JB is looking to hold a meeting to introduce these new workers to the voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>The programme is set to last for one year.</p> <p>This concluded JB's introduction to the programme.</p>	
6	Members updates	
	<p>Nicola Butler of Young K&C directed members to their website for two funding opportunities including disabled young people.</p> <p>Maternity Champions spoke about the work that they doing, providing support and information for expectant and new parents through pregnancy, child birth and the transition into parenthood.</p> <p>This concluded the forum.</p>	
7	Close	

Attendance

	Name	Organisation
1	Angela Spence	KCSC
2	Clare Scott Booth	The Sheppard Trust
3	Esma Dukali	Dalgarno Trust
4	Esther Pickering	The ClementJames Centre
5	Everine Shand	RBKC
6	Fenn Reynolds	KCSC
7	Hannah Ali	Re-engage
8	Harmony Fitzgerald	Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) Kensington & Chelsea
9	James Barrell	Shelter
10	Jean-Elie Koumi	Nova New Opportunities
11	Joe Batty	KCSC

12	John Holden	Venture Community Association
13	John Francis	RBKC
14	John Holden	Venture Community Association
15	Kenny Anifowose	Nucleus Legal Advice Centre
16	Megan Redhouse	Nucleus Legal Advice Centre
17	Mel Christodoulou	Family Friends
18	Nada Sallam	KCSC
19	Nicola Butler	Young K & C
20	Nigel Eggleston	Turning Point
21	Patricia Alert	World's End Under Fives Centre
22	Sona Djerrahian	Venture Community Association
23	Sophie FitzHugh	Rugby Portobello Trust
24	Tom Richards	KCSC
25	Zahraa Fedhel	Octavia Housing Association