



LINK

THE VOICE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

GET on Board!

This month we launch our new governance project 'Get on Board Kensington and Chelsea' in partnership with the Volunteer Centre. So, what is on offer and why should your organisation get involved?

Help with trustee recruitment

Could your trustee board do with some new members? Perhaps some younger people with new ideas or professionals who can bring in new skills? Our project can help you recruit the right trustees to help steer your organisation into the future. We will be running regular trustee recruitment events over the next two years where you can come along and meet with potential new trustees. The first of these is our launch event on 8 December.

We will also assist you to prepare for trustee recruitment and induction and we will be running training for all new recruits to help ensure they fully understand their new roles and responsibilities as trustees.

In-house training, advice and facilitation

Does your board need some refresher training on charity trustees or advice on a specific issue? Would they find it useful to have a facilitated session on strategic planning? Whatever your in-house training and facilitation needs are, contact us for a chat and we will see how we can help you.

Trustee Network

We will also be continuing to support trustees by providing our popular seminars and a yearly trustee conference. These are a chance for trustees to meet, network, learn about and discuss issues to do with governance. Topics at previous seminars included employment good practice, managing your charity



Current Social Council trustees Michael Bach and Ingrid Jacobson-Pinter

money, collaboration and dealing with change. Let us know what you want on the agenda for our 2012 events!

'GET ON BOARD'...

Meet potential trustees at our launch evening
8 December
5.45pm – 8pm at the **Lighthouse**.

More info: siobhan@kcsc.org.uk www.kcsc.org.uk/events

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CONTACT US

Chief Executive

Mary Gardiner 020 7243 9803
mary@kcsc.org.uk

Office Manager

Harjit Dhaliwal 020 7243 9801
harjit@kcsc.org.uk

Administrator

Mica Horgan 020 7243 9800
mica@kcsc.org.uk

Organisational Development Team

Organisational Development Manager

Lev Pedro 020 7243 9809
lev@kcsc.org.uk 07540 721765

Development Officer Capacity Building

Siobhan Sollis 020 7243 9807
siobhan@kcsc.org.uk

Development Officer

Brenda Nambooze 020 7243 9807
brenda@kcsc.org.uk

Events Co-ordinator

Ambika Sharma 020 7243 9804
ambika@kcsc.org.uk

Policy Development Team

Policy Development Manager

Angela Spence 020 7243 9802
angela@kcsc.org.uk

Development Officer – Partnerships and Forums

Mohammed Miah 020 7243 9808
mohammed@kcsc.org.uk

Information and Communications Officer

Kuldip Bajwa 020 7243 9805
kuldip@kcsc.org.uk

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA SOCIAL COUNCIL

London Lighthouse
111-117 Lancaster Road
London W11 1QT

020 7243 9800

info@kcsc.org.uk
www.kcsc.org.uk

Charity no 1087457
Limited company no. 4146375

Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC)

works to support locally focused
voluntary and community
organisations serving local residents.

The views expressed in Link are not
necessarily those of KCSC.

SHORTS

Give us your thoughts on Link

Following feedback from our KCSC Impact survey we are reviewing Link magazine and would like your thoughts.

Tell us what you like best about the magazine, or what you don't like. Should it be more frequent? Would you prefer a different format? What sort of articles would you like to see? Is it readable or do we use too much jargon? How do you get hold of a copy? Would you be happy to read it online?

Any thoughts would be appreciated? Please email us.

More info: Kuldip Bajwa

kuldip@kcsc.org.uk

020 7243 9805

Making sharing information easier

We have recently added some new features to our website designed to make it easier for you to keep up with what's happening in the sector.

Receive automatic site updates



Wherever you see this small orange symbol you can click it to subscribe to receive automatic updates whenever that page is updated. You can be kept informed without actually visiting the site!

Share what you read via social bookmarking



Share

If you like what you read on our site you can share it with one click with your friends and colleagues. Send it directly to a service like facebook or just email directly.

Keep in touch through Facebook or Twitter



Why not connect to us via your Facebook account? Our new page is at:
www.facebook.com/KCSocialCouncil.



To get the latest news Twitter users can follow us
@KCSocialCouncil

What do you think?



Our blog articles give our views on what is happening in the sector. In the coming months we will be inviting guest bloggers to share their thoughts too. You can join in the conversation and post your own replies. So if you have something to say why not share it.

Sign up for mobile text alerts



Ever missed a meeting because you didn't have time to check your email? Well now you can sign up to receive reminders and important notices via text message at no cost to yourself.

For help or training in using any of these features or if you would like advice on how you can use them in your own organisation please get in touch.

More info: kuldip@kcsc.org.uk

020 7243 9805

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

As our organisations work their way through this period of uncertainty and change, in an environment that is becoming ever more complex, good governance is as crucial as ever. As the Charity Commission says, ‘without good and committed trustees, no charity can hope to succeed’.

It is the role of the board of trustees to steer an organisation into the future. Trustees make the key decisions, set the strategy and oversee the work of an organisation. So in this current climate what key features does a board need to have to be at its most effective?

Firstly, trustees need to ensure that they act as the custodians of the mission of the organisation. In these tough financial times organisations may consider changing some of their services or taking on new work such as tri-borough or public service contracts. Whatever the change, the trustees need to ensure that the organisation is acting in the best interests of its beneficiaries and is not steering off course from its objectives.

Bearing this in mind however, trustees also need to be open to and not afraid of change. They need to have an ability to ‘think outside the box’ or to change the way ‘it has always worked’ when necessary. It is part of a trustee board’s role to regularly review how the organisation is operating and to decide if its work is still relevant. It may be that the organisation needs to adapt, for example to new needs among its users, or to changes in the environment.

As our recent research here at the Social Council has shown many of our organisations have been affected by public spending cuts and for some of us demand from our users has also increased. Trustees have the difficult task of deciding how to respond to these pressures. With reduced funding they may need to make unpopular decisions, like reducing services or staffing levels, or they may consider working in partnership or merging with other organisations.

In such circumstances trustees need to be able to work as a team to carefully consider different options.

“ Trustees need to ensure that the organisation is upholding its values, its independence and its focus on what it was set up to do. They also need to assess the risks of any new endeavour.”

They need an ability to think long term about the future and think strategically. They need to be sensitive to feelings of anxiety amongst staff but ultimately they need to make clear and balanced decisions in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries.

Through any such change trustees need to support their senior worker. It is also important that they know how to ask the right questions, to get the information they need, to check things are on course and the

organisation is running well. However, they also need to be able to delegate appropriately and not get too involved in day to day tasks. If a trustee is also a service volunteer in the organisation they need to be clear about separating these two roles.

Finally boards need to review their own performance, from time to time, as well as their own make up, taking measures to bring in new trustees where there are gaps. A healthy board is one that has a mixture of skills and experiences and a range of people feeding in different perspectives and opinions. Its members must be good team players who work well together.

In these challenging times the importance of this cannot be underplayed. This is why, at the Social Council, we are making trustee support and help in trustee recruitment one of our top priorities. We urge your organisation to take advantage of the support we have on offer.

Want to know more?

Governance news and trustee resources can be found on:

www.kcsc.org.uk/trustees-and-governance

Shaping t

Up to 70 participants from across Kensington and Chelsea's the Social Council Conference and AGM on Thursday 17 November. T the outlook for the local sector with a focus on how organisatio

Morning presentations by Lord Victor Adebowale, Chief Executive of Turning Point and equalities expert Leander Neckles set the scene for a lively panel discussion featuring Andy Gregg of the Charities Evaluation Service, Anna Waterman, Senior Public Health Manager for the local NHS and Colin Prescod, local activist and chair of HistoryTalk.

Our afternoon was kicked off by a lively energiser session led by Aneesa Chaudhry before Cllr Rock Feilding-Mellen, RBKC Cabinet Member for Civil Society; put forward his views on Localism and responded to questions from the audience.

The afternoon workshop session saw attendees working to identify the key issues facing residents and discussions followed on how the local voluntary sector could work towards tackling them.

Throughout the day attendees had added their wishes for future to a 'time capsule'. 'Calypso King' Alexander D' Great helped us round of the day by putting what he'd heard into song.

Social Council AGM

Our AGM business was conducted at the end of the morning with Mayor Cllr Julie Mills overseeing proceedings after Lev Pedro and Angela Spence highlighted some of our achievements from the last year.

We said goodbye to treasurer Tom Fitch of CaSH and trustee Raj Jogia of Pepperpot Day Centre who are stepping down but were pleased to welcome Roohy Shahin of the Persian Care Centre on to our board.



Roohy Shahin

So what came out of the day?

MORNING

Leander Neckles brought the audience up to speed with the new Equalities Act urging voluntary and community sector organisations to make use of provisions like the Public Sector Equality Duty to hold councils to account.



Lord Victor Adebowale spoke of the need for a more 'business-like' approach from the sector and warned against confusing our day to day tasks with what he termed as 'political activism'. One contributor responded by saying that combining a 'business-like' approach with active campaigning helped make us more effective.

Colin Prescod later responded to Lord Adebowale's comments on activism by saying he was confusing 'political activism' and 'social activism' which had always played an important role for the voluntary sector and should continue to do so.

Lord Victor was also quizzed on the role of Turning Point in running the new Health Centre in Earl's Court.

The Future

voluntary and community sector attended *Shaping the Future*, they were joined by councillors and local statutory officers to discuss how they could continue to support local residents in the years ahead.



He gave a commitment to working closely with the local community, to design services that meet the needs of local service users.

The pressure to keep up with ever changing requirements from commissioners was raised by an audience member during the panel debate. Ann Waterman sympathised, saying organisations must focus on their strengths and really sell their outcomes. She said the VCS needed to teach commissioners about language to avoid the use of too much confusing jargon.



Andy Gregg questioned the 'Big Society' agenda and asked whether it was being used to cloak our role in helping to dismantle the state. He said he preferred the term 'Good Society'.

AFTERNOON

Cllr Feilding-Mellen spoke about how he saw Localism empowering communities and encouraging them to take responsibility. He referred to City Living, Local Life as an example of how local people can get involved in making decisions that affect their local area. He was quizzed on the 'contradiction' between localism and tri-borough working which has seen contracts awarded across the three boroughs excluding smaller providers. The example given by audience member Andrew Kelly of Westway Community Transport had seen organisations with a turnover below £20 million



excluded from the process.

It was clear from contributions that localism and our capacity to take advantage of new legislation will be a key factor in our ability to empower residents.

The workshop session highlighted a number of issues which included affordable housing, benefit cuts and reduced access to services which it was felt will impact on local people in the coming years.

More integrated services including signposting and referral systems across the voluntary sector were also seen as a way forward. The new 'Advice Now' pilot triage system was highlighted as good practice.

A NEW NHS?

What's in store for the voluntary sector?

18 months into the new Government term, we find ourselves in the middle of the biggest restructuring of the public healthcare system in its history.

And this is happening at a time when people are most anxious and vulnerable due to the economic conditions. It is now being admitted in certain quarters that huge numbers of GPs actually neither want nor have the capability to commission healthcare services with the GPs body the British Medical Association passing a motion in November expressing its "opposition to the whole Health and Social Care Bill"

So we will see 'Commissioning Support Organisations' (CSO's) being contracted to deliver the commissioning function to consortia of GPs (now called Clinical Commissioning Groups). And there will be an open market for CSO's, which will bring great new opportunities for the profit-making health & social care sector. Yet the Government denies that it's privatising the NHS!

There are some lights at the end of the tunnel for the voluntary sector. For example, 'Any Qualified Provider' is a policy direction that opens up delivery of healthcare services to non-NHS operators. In this new regime, voluntary organisations as well as commercial firms will have the same access to public-sector contracts as NHS providers.

GREAT! This can only be good for local people because our organisations are in touch with local communities and their needs, and can deliver highly flexible and responsive services. But unfortunately we know from experience that VCOs are not on an even playing field, as we do not have 'loss-leader' resources to sink into complex bureaucratic procurement processes. And often those processes blatantly discriminate against community organisations – by, for example needing a turnover of £20 Million to even apply (yes, this happened here!)

What have we learned from the 'employment and skills' sector over the last ten years, where we've seen large 'prime contracts' being awarded to companies whose primary purpose is to generate shareholder profit?

This created a costly level of administration between commissioner and the community, diverting funding away from on-the-ground delivery, big profits being made from public-service delivery, and the destabilisation of community-based services. And were the outcomes for service users any better? Will we see the same happen to our NHS?



You have our commitment as your Social Council to do everything we can to make sure that you have a fair chance at going for new opportunities, ~~and we don't end up with local services being run by a handful of national charities and corporations.~~

- We will support you to be ready for commissioning and tendering.
- We will support and develop consortia to give you access to larger contracts.
- We will campaign for grants, funding for small grassroots projects, which has shown over decades to be an effective way to meet needs identified on the ground.
- We will update you on major policy changes and how they will affect you.
- We will promote and champion the voluntary sector among public-sector colleagues.
- We will work to maintain our strong working relationships with local NHS Commissioners

And some things you can do:

- Maintain good strong governance in your organisation, so that you remain relevant and accountable to your beneficiaries. This is even more important in times of uncertainty.
- Be flexible and open to new ways of working, and be clear on where you are prepared to compromise and where you are not.
- Use the 'PQQ' page on our website (www.kcsc.org.uk/pqq) to prepare yourself for tendering opportunities.
- Look into joining local consortia.
- Keep up-to-date with policy changes through us and other sources of information.
- And please inform us of any contract opportunities that you come across.

We stand a much better chance by working together.

VOF highlights of 2011

As austerity measures began taking their toll, 2011 saw an increasingly challenging year for the Kensington & Chelsea voluntary and community sector. KCSC's Impact of the Cuts report highlighted the growing pressures faced by organisations to continue their work and meet the needs of service users. Despite this, the sector pulled together demonstrating its commitment to serving those in most need.

The voluntary organisations forums have played an important role in bringing organisations together and presenting a united voice for the sector. Throughout 2011, the VOFs invited colleagues from both the statutory and voluntary sector to present on key topics and also stimulated important discussions and debates. Here are some of the highlights from VOFs in 2011.

During the **Main VOF** in March there was a presentation and discussion on the **Giving Green Paper**, which outlined the government's ideas for building a stronger culture of giving time and money, and to initiate debate about our attitudes to giving. Whilst the forum supported the need to encourage social philanthropy, it felt there were key barriers that needed to be removed to make more 'giving' possible.

In July the Head of Policy for Race on the Agenda (ROTA) was invited to the **Engaging Communities VOF** speak about the **Equality Act**. The new Act merged previous anti-discrimination legislation and simplified it to make the law easier to understand and implement. The presentation also highlighted current equality concerns and stressed the importance of continuing to exert a collective effort for fairness and equality for all.

At September's **Main VOF** there was an ardent discussion on the **summer riots**. The unrest provoked some of the most heated debates of the year, and for many commentators, the cause of the disturbance was simply criminality. The voluntary sector however, had identified issues that were far more complex and discussions were held about the implications of the riots on the voluntary sector.

Changes to VOFs

Following a review of the VOFs in 2010, KCSC made some changes to reflect the recommendations made to enhance its overall benefits to stakeholders.

The Engaging Communities VOF has been redesigned with the aim of providing more support

to grassroots, micro and BME organisations. The forum focuses on issues that are more relevant to the intended target groups and offers more opportunities for them to promote their work and is more engaging.

A new Health and Wellbeing VOF was launched in October. The first meeting was attended by providers of health and wellbeing services from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. The forum hosted presentations from Turning Point, Crossroads and The King's Fund, and attendees enjoyed a great networking opportunity over lunch.

VOF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Thursday 15 March 2012, 9am - 4pm
Small Hall, Kensington Town Hall.

Bring together local stakeholders to raise issues important to them, to discuss ways of addressing those issues and to develop a set of actions to be taken forward.

Facing the Future was the third and final instalment of our State of the Sector reports. It is based on the findings of the **Effects of the Cuts survey** and the **KCSC Impact Survey 2011**.



To request your copy email kuldip@kcsc.org.uk or call 020 7243 9800.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 7 December	10.30 am -12.30 pm	Children, Young People and Families VOF	Kensington Town Hall
Wednesday 14 December	9.45 am -1.00 pm	Main VOF	Kensington Town Hall
Monday 16 January	3.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Older Peoples VOF	Kensington Town Hall
Tuesday 7 February	10.00 am -12.00 pm	Engaging Communities VOF	Kensington Town Hall

Woman's Trust helps women affected by domestic violence regain control over their lives by providing counselling and other support services. Chair, Ruth Kaufman answered a few questions for us on their work and on how they have overcome a cut in funding.

Why is your work important?

Domestic violence affects one in 4 women in the UK, across all races, religions, cultures and classes; and the knock-on effects are the biggest single cause of women's mental health problems. Our counselling helps women overcome the long-term damage and live normal, productive lives again.

You recently lost the contract to supply Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) to RBKC and Westminster City Council. How has that affected you?

Surprisingly, losing the contract has had positive effects on Woman's Trust. We can now focus almost entirely on our core specialism of free, high-quality counselling; which means that managers and trustees can spend more time on continuous improvement, publicity, building funder relationships, etc. Meanwhile the IDVA service continues with the new provider (Advance), and we cross-refer between IDVA and Woman's Trust counselling, support and court liaison just as we used to.

How about the financial consequences?

As soon as the re-commissioning was mooted, we had to face up to the risk that we would lose the contract. Our budgeting and strategic planning was all conducted on the basis of three different scenarios: keeping the IDVA service, losing IDVA but otherwise maintaining the status quo, and 'worst possible'. So even before we knew the



contract outcome, we were geared up to deal with the 'worst possible', and we knew what we had to do to survive.

But surely survival isn't easy when you have lost a large part of your income?

That's true. We have succeeded for two main reasons. First, Woman's Trust was never solely – or even primarily – an IDVA provider. Our mission is to provide counselling services, and these were not affected by the contract re-let. Our counselling service is distinctive, highly regarded by professionals and partner agencies, and highly valued by clients; this interests both statutory and non-statutory funders. Second: our staff and volunteers. Woman's Trust's finances were grim three years ago, and since then we have all been working to cut costs and find efficiencies. As a result our team know inside-out the link between managing costs and maintaining the service, and managers keep them up-to-speed on funding developments. We had, and have, a fantastic team whose commitment and responsiveness have made all the difference in dealing with the changes.

And how do you see the future?

We are continuing to focus on improving women's mental health through high-quality counselling; and working hard to raise funds from diverse sources to both maintain and expand this service. To quote a recent client: "Woman's Trust provided a service to me that I greatly needed and could not get elsewhere. I think without their help I would have given up on life and sought desperate measures, I could not think straight and was finding it hard to function". That's what's behind it all.

More info:

www.womanstrust.org.uk

If you haven't received your free 2012 calendar from us yet why not order one by calling **020 7243 9800** or email kuldip@kcsc.org.uk.

On one side we highlight top tips to 'make localism work for you and on the other we highlight some of the inequalities in our borough.

