

West Northumberland VCS Assembly network meeting Wednesday 23 March 2016 – Forum Cinema Hexham

In attendance:

Lisa Robinson	Albemarle Barracks - Army Welfare Service
Paul Adamson	Number 28 - Hexham East Regeneration Office
Georgia Evans	Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services
Annie Evans	Natural Ability
Pat Devlin	Number 28
Chris Baker	Health Watch Northumberland
Rosemary Theobalds	HCP/Churches Together in Hexham/Gateway into the Community
Maureen Shepherd	Northumberland CVA
Liz Johnston	Northumberland Cancer Support Group
Shirley Irving	Northumberland Cancer Support Group
Joan Peugniez	Northumberland Cancer Support Group
Ann Atkinson	Northumberland CVA/VCS Assembly
Lauren Langton	Tynedale Community Bank
Jay Thacker	Hexham Community Centre
Senga Bond	
Tamsin Beevor	Hexham Community Partnership
Jude Garrow Compson	Hexham Community Partnership

The meeting opened with a talk by Lauren Langton on the work of Tynedale Community Bank.

- TCB was set up to offer affordable loans and secure savings to all people living and working in Northumberland.
- Locally-led ethical financial option with access to all who want to save or borrow
- Offers help with education on managing money to children and adults
- Sustainable model

Three guiding principles:

1. Choice
2. Consumer – puts consumer first – no setting-up fees, early repayment penalties etc
3. Community – not a bank of last resort – TCB there for the whole of the community

TCB wants to be able to help the people who need it by offering affordable loans, tailored to individual circumstances. The bank now has £150,000 in deposits and has so far granted six loans since it set up in November 2015.

TCB is not in competition with Northumberland Credit Union.

There are info points at the Parish Centre, Hexham Abbey (Tuesday 9am-12noon) and Allendale Village Hall. If people cannot get into an info centre they can call, email or access the information via the TCB website. Credit checks are carried out and if there is an adverse history TCB will still look at the application to assess the circumstances and find out the history of any adverse credit. If an applicant has the ability and willingness to repay they will still look at the application.

Georgia Evans asked if there might be any help available to victims of financial abuse – Lauren was happy to talk to Georgia further about this and how loans could be structured differently to suit these cases.

Senga Bond – lots of organisations with reserves which are not attracting any interest. Has TCB thought about approaching such organisations? Lauren advised that there are a couple of organisations who have done this already but it is still very much an untapped resource.

TCB would love to expand to more Northumberland locations, eg Bellingham but needs many more volunteers.

Ann Atkinson – the VCS Assembly exists to provide an influential voice for the sector. It provides an opportunity for members to raise any issue which CVA can then raise with NCC. The Voluntary and Community Sector Advisory Group is trying to have more of a strategic decision influence and is pushing to have a representative on the Health and Well Being group of NCC.

Northumberland CVA is funded by NCC who is willing to support them for the next two years but the level of funding has been cut. Next year's key targets will include funding advice via three funding fairs, support and training for trustees (both bespoke and general training), supported voluntary activities which Maureen Shepherd, who is replacing Anne Kidd, will be involved in.

The Assembly has 260 members but keen to have as many members as possible. There is a refugee and asylum seekers working group.

There is currently a vacancy on the Executive Committee which meets quarterly and also a vacancy on the Employability and Skills group - please contact Ann Atkinson if you are interested in either – Ann.atkinson@northumberlandcva.org.uk

Georgia Evans – NDAS –

- relaunched last December and now covers the whole of Northumberland.
- The children's service is being launched in Hexham Abbey on 15/4.
- Male service pilot is going well.
- Now have a stalking and harassment specialist
- Majority of work is now in SE Northumberland and service now covers all aspects of domestic abuse including high risk
- Taking on more volunteers
- Funding now for two part-time workers for Children's Services
- Now working with No. 28 – the Hexham East Regeneration Office
- The partnership with Sure Start is developing well
- Freedom programme – now developing a toolkit for this

Paul Adamson kindly offered to advertise the volunteering opportunities via the bulletin he produces.

Jay Thacker – Hexham Community Centre –

- Hoping to launch another lunch club
- Open Arms project – funding until the autumn for older people who are isolated – working in partnership with Hexham Youth Initiative on this and planning a big fundraiser for local charity
- Very informal drop-in sessions on a Tuesday at the Community Centre

Paul Adamson/Pat Devlin – Hexham East Regeneration Office No. 28

- Funding from ISOS to run sessions in confidence building and mindfulness
- New landscaped area on the estate which residents are helping to plant
- Digital Inclusion support – available to anyone who is excluded via easy-to-learn courses – 23 people have been helped so far than still spaces available – contact NCDN direct for details of local co-ordinators
- The Work Club has been running since 2012 and is on Tuesday mornings, 10am-12noon at No. 28 – run with help from National Careers Service and offers help with CVs, on-line applications, Job Seekers, ESA etc. and 4 people have recently gained employment.
- iPad and tablet training sessions coming up

Chris Barker – Healthwatch Northumberland

- Healthwatch is coming to the end of its first three years and not sure what will happen at the end of March
- Looking at what's been done, what's emerged and will use this information to inform the next stage of work

- Major issues which have come up will be looked at in more detail
- April – start of the Care Quality Commission inspection of emergency ambulance services, patient transport services and 111 – HWN needs feedback from the public re their experiences of any of these services
- Clinical audit – quality improvement audit – NHCT is asking people if they'd like to take part and further information will be posted on their website
- Easy read system for information being put around Northumberland by helping primary healthcare practices to improve the information they put out for people with sight or hearing difficulties.

Annie Evans – Natural Ability

Natural Ability offers a day care service for people with learning difficulties through animal care, fence building, environmental conservation etc. There are vacancies on a Wednesday afternoon – please contact Annie.evans@naturalability.org

Rosemary Theobalds

- **Gateway into the Community project** – the current main focus of this is the work the project is doing as a result of the Garfield Weston award in respect of helping to realise the dream of a Hexham drop-in centre with retail etc. Project has developed enormously with sports teams and getting coaches in cricket, tennis and football.
- **Stop Gap** – homelessness project – seven people currently in the house and six in bungalows. The project cannot provide daily activities or life skills training and the funding situation is very serious.

Tamsin Beevor – Hexham Community Partnership

- Application to Help through Crisis fund was unsuccessful. Now looking at how to continue to provide services at No. 28. If anyone has any information on how their organisation works with No. 28 or if their needs are not currently being met and might be via No. 28, please get in touch with Claire Heaviside – number28@hexhamcommunity.net
- West Northumberland Food Bank now also progressing its own funding applications
- Cinema – a new film festival – Wide Skies – will take place over the weekend of 17-19 June. Different community groups have been asked to choose and promote a film.

Shirley Irving – Northumberland Cancer Support Group

- This group has been active for about 20 years – they are unsure as to how long they can continue at the hospital and may need to find an alternative venue.
- Group meets on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Tuesdays of the month and offer circle dancing, meditation, speakers etc
- Group has a link with Macmillan Cancer Support
- They are desperate for a volunteer Treasurer and Secretary – please contact sirving@aromamystique.plus.com if you know of anyone
- The group membership is small but trying to build it up and it is there for carers as well as patients and survivors
- They have a good library for information and can also offer therapy sessions.

Lisa Robinson – Army Welfare at Albemarle Barracks

- The Barracks is very busy with a new regiment
- Linking more with the community eg via NDAS
- Recently completed the Big Dreams project (see Helix Arts website) with young people on the camp and found this to be a really successful and valuable project.
- Lisa struggles to get volunteers for their Youth Club as they are unable to offer any payment or expenses
- The British Legion recently funded a residential stay for 70 young people
- If anyone has any ideas on how Lisa can link into the community even more please contact her – AWS-4X-Catterick-CDW1@mod.uk

John McGough -Northumberland Community Development Network (via email)

- Let's Get Together a community development project funded by Peoples Health Trust for 2 yrs in South Tynedale-a very rural area. Aim to increase activity of residents of villages,hamlets,rural steadings using local village halls and other community meeting venues A local planning group is working with NCDN and CAN to offer activities as demanded by local residents. Delivery partners are now being engaged to work alongside NCDN to sustain this work.
- Digital Inclusion -our volunteers are working across the whole county supporting individuals (mainly over 55yrs) in using digital media to increase benefits claims/IT skills and bringing isolated people together. We have just secured funding from the Tinder Foudation to continue this project for a further year.
- Nearing its end in funding in June is our work supporting young adults with learning differences in having their voice heard with mainline services and developing a social enterprise.
- If people want to know more please contact me by email – mcgoughjohn@hotmail.com

Date of next meeting – to be confirmed but likely to be June