

Presentation by Links CVS

To North East Derbyshire District Council Cabinet on

28th September 2016

RE: The grant of £9779.00 that Links were awarded from NEDDC during 2015/2016

Short introduction of Links core objectives/activities - outlining the service that NEDDC commissioned.

A. Background

Links provides infrastructure support to voluntary and community groups by giving information, advice and training. We also work in partnership with a wide range of agencies including local authorities and health agencies. We have a dedicated website www.linkscvs.org.uk that provides access to basic information and advice for groups.

In 2015/16, we were awarded £9,779.00 from NEDDC. It was just under 17% of our total core budget (which is £58,314.00): £30,755 from DCC & £17,780 from CBC.

We offer the following services to serve the communities in North East Derbyshire:

- funding and policy information workshops;
- weekly general and funding email bulletins and quarterly newsletters (Linkline) to keep groups informed about funding opportunities and policy update that are relevant to them;
- funding and general advice appointments for groups regarding general group running, policy development, service planning, fundraising, human and financial resource management.

Currently, we have 271 groups on our database that operate or have coverage in North East Derbyshire.

During 2015/16, we supported 48 VCS groups either based in or have coverage in North East Derbyshire.

In terms of supporting the Council's priorities, we supported groups with information and advice to organise activities that promote healthy community, community safety and the equality and diversity agenda, etc.

We also gave advice to groups to enable them to support and work with local residents on key issues including community safety, community involvement, health and wellbeing

(incl. social isolation), up-skilling and training, access to services such as transport, legal, welfare and benefit advice.

The top 3 issues why groups in North East Derbyshire used our service were:

- **group establishment/legal status;**
- **group/policy development;**
- **and funding.**

The typical time commitment involved to support groups tend to be on average 5 hours per group.

In terms of feedback which we received from groups regarding the quality of our services, the following are examples:

- Links provides an essential service that groups would find it difficult to replace without; and
- groups would struggle without the information, advice and support provided by Links.

Finally, I would like to share two case studies with you to give you more details about the work we do with groups.

B. Case Studies

Links has asked permission from the groups for this information to be made public. They have all agreed.

1. S21 Live - Eckington

This organisation was set up in 2010 as part of Eckington Development Company. Its aim is to provide access to all aspects of the music industry and other related activities, to the youth and general community of S21 and surrounding area, in order to learn new skills, develop career goals or as a spare time activity. They offer guitar, drums, keyboards, singing and recording lessons.

Students are entered for exams and are successful in gaining certificates which are presented at showcase events where students perform to the public.

You can see more information by following this link <https://www.facebook.com/S21Live/>

In 2010 Links worked closely with NEDDC through the Community Partnerships and supported the setting up of S21 Live as a project of Eckington Development Company. It has a separate committee and in June 2015 decided to become an independent organisation with its own constitution and bank account.

They have moved from the Eckington Development Company building and now meet at Renishaw Community Hall and have 40+ members.

S21 Live contacted Links in 2015 to help with this transition. We have provided information on setting up as an unincorporated organisation with an opportunity to change the legal status at a later date should this be found necessary.

The Group Adviser met with the committee and communicated with committee members Brian Wood and Marie Hallows by email and telephone.

The following issues were raised and addressed:

- Tutors being on the committee. This is fine providing they are in the minimum and are not present or part of any discussion which affects them personally.
- Under 18's on the committee. It is important that young people taking part in the project can have a say in the running of the organisation. It is possible for the young people to have an advisory group and for a representative to attend the committee meetings and put forward their views. Under this legal status they are not allowed to vote or be cheque signatories.
- Policies needed – the group were advised that they needed the following policies: Safeguarding Children, Equality & Diversity, Complaints Procedure, and Volunteer Policy. Templates for all these policies are available on Links website and the Groups Adviser was able to offer advice on developing appropriate policies for the group.
- Insurance – Public Liability Insurance is needed for the group to operate. Tutors are self employed, and so the group does not employ any staff, and therefore, Employers Liability is not needed.
- Funding – the group have received funding in the past from Coalfields Regeneration Trust £57,000, Derbyshire County Council £10,000 and Rykneld Homes £800. Links will help with further funding when required.
- Ownership of equipment, an issue with the Development Company which has now been resolved. Links offered support and advice.

This is a good example of the kind of technical information that Links can provide to groups that are starting up or who want to change their status.

2. New Hope Community Church – Killamarsh

Links facilitates bi-monthly funding seminars which are free and open to all groups in Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire.

The format is similar at all the seminars; a representative from a funding body makes a presentation outlining what they fund, the criteria for applying and tips for completing a successful application. There is an opportunity after the presentation for general questions and answers. Groups can book a one to one session with the funder to talk about a specific

application. The Group Adviser is there to offer advice and provide follow up support if necessary.

These have proved very popular with funders and groups alike.

In September 2015 Big Lottery was the funder at a seminar held at the Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire Asian Association in Hasland. This was very well attended by 44 people representing 29 groups, 14 of the groups are based or operate in North East Derbyshire District Council area.

Several groups met with the funders and we invited them back to a follow up session in March 2016.

New Hope Community Church contacted Links by completing our online Funding Questionnaire. This comes through to our main email address and to the Group Adviser who contacts the group. After a telephone conversation it was felt that they would meet the criteria for a Reaching Communities Application. They attended the Big Lottery Funding Seminar and attended the follow up session in March 2016.

It opened in 2007 and has worked in partnership with Foodbanks, provided a Job Club and focuses on people with mental health problems. They receive referrals from NEDDC.

The project they are seeking funding for will serve the community within a 6 miles radius of Killamarsh.

Their main aim is to combat poverty and social exclusion, especially those caught up in domestic violence or homelessness. This is achieved by their core business activity of re-using, recycling and repairing furniture and other household goods that may otherwise have gone to landfill. This benefits local communities, both socially and environmentally, whilst generating core income to sustain the project by selling surplus items. These items are then provided and installed at no cost to those most in need via a referral panel of front line care professionals.

The furniture project has been operational for several months, staffed by volunteers and operating from a warehouse supplied on short term lease from Derbyshire County Council.

The group needs funding to continue and develop this furniture service. Centre Parcs refurbish their lodges on an annual basis and rather than this go to landfill they have agreed to donate the furniture to New Hope Community Church. The furniture will be put into furniture packs for people who have nothing, particularly those fleeing domestic violence.

Big Lottery officers were very interested in this scheme, but unfortunately it did not quite fit the criteria for a Reaching Communities application. They agreed to go away and discuss it at a policy level within Big Lottery. Links was able to support the group whilst these discussions took place and act as a go between. It was a successful outcome, Big Lottery gave it the go ahead and a first stage application is being worked on now.

Links is able to support groups at different stages of a funding application at whatever is appropriate for the group.

C. Key Challenges:

- The reduction of funding opportunities for Links (as an infrastructure organisation) hinders the potential growth to increase human resources, hence making it more challenging to sustain its core service in the long run to meet the diverse needs of the frontline VCS groups.
- The reduction of public services means that front line VCS groups are getting more demands from their service users for support which in turn would require more support from Links, the local CVS, to identify and secure funding.

During the last 3 years, in particular, Links has continuously been reviewing and re-innovating its ways of supporting VCS frontline groups by prioritising funding and group development support which include the publication of the weekly funding and general email bulletins and the organisation of regular funding seminars that introduce different funding bodies and their priorities to groups.