Supporting access to advice, guidance and representation for Gateshead's community groups and organisations

Summary of 2016 survey findings

Gateshead Council

Introduction

Infrastructure bodies, such as Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) are organisations that provide advice and support for the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and also provide a key role representing the sector to ensure it has a voice, and to help build its capacity to help create stronger communities. Aided by Council funding, this role was provided by Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council (GVOC) for many years, until it ran into financial difficulties and closed down in May 2016.

The Council maintained its commitment to supporting access to advice, guidance and representation for Gateshead's groups and organisations for 2016/17 by entering into an Agreement with Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS), in April 2016.

Looking ahead beyond 2017

The Agreement with NCVS is an interim arrangement whilst the Council considered options for support for infrastructure services beyond April 2017, which involves conversations with Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Gateshead CCG, as well as gathering the views of groups and organisations that will help shape and influence the type of support and its method of delivery.

The survey

A survey was carried out via Gateshead Council's consultation portal between 4th August 2016 and 9th September 2016. Invitations to take part in the survey were sent to the 393 organisations that have received funding over the last 5 years via the Council's Capacity Building Fund.

A total of 66 organisations provided 77 responses, representing a 20% response rate. Not all respondents answered every question, therefore percentages are based on the number of responses to each question rather than the total number of responses received.

This paper a summary of the main findings from the survey.

Type of organisation responding

Organisations were able to select more than one option where relevant.

Registered Charity	65%
Company Ltd by Guarantee	32%
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)	20%
Small constituted unregistered community group	12%
Small un-constituted group	1%

Organisation Size and Characteristics

The survey was completed by organisations covering a broad spectrum of characteristics. It should be noted that whilst the spread of contributions is useful when considering options, the nature of the responses does not necessarily reflect the profile of organisations in Gateshead, the vast majority of which are operated by volunteers.

0 employees	12%
Up to 10 employees	17%
More than 10 employees	15%
An organisation with up to 10 employees	17%
An organisation with more than 10 employees	15%
An organisation with no employees	12%
An organisation which has a national support body but also a local structure	12%
A national organisation with an HQ elsewhere delivering services in Gateshead	7%
Other	2%

Organisation income

Organisations with an annual income of less than £100,000 comprised 70% of the responses received. Of these, 57% had an annual income of less than £10,000.

£0 - £10,000	30%
£10,001 - £50,000	28%
£50,001 - £100,000	13%
£100,001 - £250,000	8%
£250,001 - £500,000	7%
£500,001 - £1,000,000	5%
Over £1,000,000	10%

Principal sources of income

The respondents indicated that the majority of their income came from the trading of goods and services, followed by contributions from charitable trusts and foundations.

> 50% income from trading goods/ services, or hiring out facilities	28%
> 50% income from charitable trusts and foundations	22%
> 50% income from public sector grants	15%
> 50% income from The Big Lottery Fund	14%
> 50% income through delivery of public sector contracts	12%
> 50% income from other Lottery distributors	7%
18 - 20% of income through delivery of non-public sector contracts	7%

Type of support accessed over the past 2 years

Out of 35 topics available to choose from in the survey, the top 5 areas of support over the last 2 years identified by 59 respondents were as follows:

Funding advice	46%
Free training	39%
DBS checks	31%
Accountancy/ payroll services	25%
Business Planning	25%
Different sources of finance	25%
Safeguarding	24%

Sources of advice and support accessed over the past 2 years

Groups and organisations responding to the survey have sought support from quite a wide variety of sources, depending on their requirements. Sources of advice mentioned by respondents have included:

- A CVS (e.g. NCVS, GVOC)
- Gateshead Council
- Consultants
- Business Advisers
- Solicitors
- Accountants / Auditors
- Parent organisation / Governing Body
- Other national, regional and local VCS organisations
- Specialist organisations e.g. School of Social Enterprise
- The Big Lottery Fund

Advice and support needs over the next 3 years

Out of 37 topics listed, the **top 6** areas of future advice and support needs identified by the 54 respondents were:

Accessing different sources of finance	61%
Funding advice	59%
Business planning	35%
Recruitment and placement of volunteers	31%
Marketing	30%
Training	30%

Support priorities over the next 3 years

The following are the top five support priorities identified by the 59 respondents:

Support to improve funding and financial stability	81%
Demonstrating impact and social value	48%
Increasing capability and skills to manage the organisation and deliver its aims	46%
Increasing commercial skills (e.g. selling goods and services)	40%
Increasing influence of the organisation	38%

The importance of an effective infrastructure support structure in Gateshead

Of the 48 respondents, 96% felt that it was important to have effective infrastructure support available to VCSE organisations, and 94% felt it was important that Gateshead Council provided resources and support to an effective infrastructure support structure.

The most effective and beneficial type of support delivery

In order of priority, 49 respondents identified the following delivery of advice and support which would be most beneficial to their needs:

Specific areas of advice / support delivered by a number of individual organisations	38%
Delivered by a single organisation	23%
Delivered by a consortium of general and specialist organisations	14%
Free peer to peer mentoring delivered by VCSE organisations	14%

The most important roles and functions of infrastructure support

Out of 49 responses, perhaps unsurprisingly free advice and training were the most desired services the respondents desire to have provided by an infrastructure support service.

Free Advice	80%
Free Information	78%
Free Support	69%
Free Training	61%
Campaigning (on behalf of the sector on issues of concern and importance)	45%
Partnership Development (across all sectors)	43%
Representation (of the sector to collect / present views on strategies and issues)	41%
Influencing (on behalf of the sector e.g. plans, strategies)	37%
Paid for Training	33%
Paid for Advice	14%
Paid for Support	14%
Paid for Information	10%

How would you like to receive advice and support in the future?

Organisations responding to this question could choose more than one preference; the spread of responses indicates a preparedness to make use of a variety of approaches although the majority preferred approach is by 1-1 meetings and regular bulletins.

Regular bulletins	57%
1-1 meetings	56%
Networking	48%
Online toolkits	48%
Training	46%

Would you be willing to provide support to other organisations?

Ten organisations expressed an interest in exploring peer support. The following are those areas of expertise that the respondents indicated they were able to offer

- Project planning
- Budgeting and finance
- Community engagement
- Equality and diversity
- Team building
- Marketing
- Fundraising
- People management
- Asset based approaches

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