

The Council for Voluntary Service for Torrridge District

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Please visit the Devon Consortium website
www.devonconsortium.net

Torrridge Matters Spring 2011 - Chief Officer Update

Spring is generally a time for a lift in mood as the days stretch and flowers begin to put in an appearance again. However, I'm fairly sure that a number of voluntary and community groups are not feeling particularly cheerful as, instead of growth, they face funding cuts and an uncertain future.

In Devon the picture is not as simple as a wholesale cutting of funds to the voluntary sector and for a number of reasons it is difficult at this point to gauge the full impact of funding reductions. Different statutory bodies are cutting different things at different levels. In some cases, grants have not been cut, but contracts that provide vital organisational income have not been renewed, have been reduced or have been restructured. Some groups are hanging on to grants, but these may have been reduced substantially, meaning that they can survive in the short term (relying on organisational reserves), but that their ability to survive in the long term is seriously eroded. And there is still next year to be faced with a promise of further cuts and reductions....

The case study of North Devon Women's Aid, included in this edition of Torrridge Matters, highlights a whole range of these issues and the impact they can have on local charities. This edition also includes a summary of the most recent Capacitybuilders survey of support organisations and the impact funding cuts are having on support services for the sector. As always, I am keen to learn if other local groups are facing similar experiences. See also Sector News to find out how to help us build a better picture of cuts in Devon.

As a CVS and as part of the Devon Association of CVS, TTVS continues to provide whatever support we can in these difficult times and more information about current activity can be found in Sector News and Inside News.

Penny Mason

Localism Bill & Big Society- update

The Localism Bill is at the report stage of its proceedings through Parliament. Although no date has currently been set, further details are becoming clearer. Consultations are 'open' for the two areas below with responses invited by **Tuesday 3rd May 2011**.

'Community Right to Buy (Assets of Community Value)' This is intended to give communities new powers to save local facilities threatened with closure or simply to identify and list assets in order to protect them.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/righttobuyconsultation>

A consultation process is also open for **'Proposals to introduce a Community Right to Challenge'**. This is intended to give voluntary and community bodies, parish councils and local authority employees the right to bring proposals for taking on the running of a local public services to the attention of the local council and will require the council to give the proposal proper consideration. With this measure, local authority employees and voluntary and community organisations will have the right to challenge the running of a local service by submitting an expression of interest (EOI) in taking over and running the service themselves. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge. The government's stated intention is that this should make it easier for local groups with good ideas to put them forward and drive improvement in local services.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/righttochallengeconsultation>

Both of these initiatives will be supported by secondary legislation in the form of statutory guidance designed to ensure that local authorities implement it in the way the government intends and responses received will inform the drafting of the statutory guidance.

Sector News

Capacitybuilders - Survey of Local Support for the Voluntary Sector

Capacitybuilders' fifth and final survey of local support providers shows 56% of respondents reporting a fall in income and highlights the following:

Widening the gap - the gap has widened considerably over the past 12 months between organisations reporting a decrease and those saying that they have seen an increase in income.

Impact of funding loss - the survey suggests that support providers are increasingly being affected by reductions or loss of funding from three key sources: Local Government, Grants / Trusts and National Government Departments:

- nearly half (46%) of respondents reported cuts in funding from local authorities – more than double the proportion from the first survey in May / June 2009
- a third (33%) have received a reduction in income from grant giving bodies and other trusts
- just over a quarter (26%) report funding cuts from National Government Departments.

Staff reductions - in response to falling income, over half of support providers have reduced the number of staff.

Increase in merger plans - there has also been an increase in organisations planning a merger; 21% reported such plans, up from 13% in 2009.

Lack of new services - meanwhile, fewer organisations are planning to deliver new services and collaboration has remained stable at just under 50%.

Demand for services remains high - the survey also shows that the vast majority of support providers continue to see an increase in demand for their services from frontline voluntary and community organisations.

For full survey go to
www.capacitybuilders.org.uk



Have you visited our new website yet?

For up to date news on the voluntary and community sector in Torridge District visit
www.torridgecvs.org.uk

Case Study—North Devon Women's Aid

Our organisation took a 40% cut in cash terms from 2011-12, having been led to expect a reduction of no more than 25% and probably considerably less than this considering the work we do with vulnerable women and children. In actuality we received a 100% funding cut to our children's workers in our refuge and have had to make three posts redundant. 1.5 posts have been cut from our funding within outreach, but we have been able to avoid redundancies here through the goodwill, commitment and generosity of our staff who have all taken a cut in hours. Of course our service will be reduced because of this and it means several hundred potential clients will receive no service at all. We have no funding for our very popular Pattern Changing courses which offer a real and proven opportunity for women in domestic violence situations to carve a new more positive life for themselves and their children. At least 100 women who were expecting to attend a course over the year will be disappointed and left with no support.

Our supporting people (SP) funding for the refuge has not been cut, but we have gone to spot purchase in our Service Level Agreement for the year. Our ability to properly support the women in refuge is severely hampered by not being able to do any support work with children and ultimately this means we may see a drop off in occupancy rates which will have an adverse effect on the spot purchase element of our SP funding, which initially will be based on maximum occupancy.

The new contract (1 year only) being offered by Devon County Council Adva has included some surprises too. Our outreach children's workers are no longer funded to work with children at level 3 (child protection) as we have been told in no uncertain terms that the statutory services will pick up this work, but this doesn't appear to be the case, and we are beginning to see the effects of this which we have reported to Ray Charran, Chair of North Devon Safeguarding Children's Board.

All in all, we are left with an already vulnerable section of North Devon Society in a much worse place. We have little capacity now for awareness work within schools which has been so successful in the past and there will inevitably be a knock on effect from this.

Sue Wallis
NDWA Manager
March 2011

If your organisation has been affected by similar issues, we want to hear from you. Please email pennym@torridgecvs.org.uk with details and also see 'Report the Cuts' on page 3 of Sector News

The Devon Association of CVS (DACVS) has responded to the Public Administration Select Committee Big Society Enquiry

We have made clear our view that, within the local circumstances of Devon:

A Big Society will depend upon a robust and diverse voluntary and community sector, which meets the needs of those communities and individuals where there is no or little financial incentive or reward to deliver services. We have restated our belief that participation in voluntary action – from formalised voluntary roles to more informal 'help your neighbour' type activity - is good for individuals and good for communities and can lead to innovative solutions to address intractable problems. We further believe that a Big Society is one where organisations delivering public services bring added social, environmental and economic value to their local communities. Encouraging this is what a 'Big' Society ought to be about.

Alongside this we have defined what, in our opinion, Big Society is **not** about. It isn't:

- An excuse to cut or reduce essential services
- A way to deliver public services on the cheap
- The means of helping more and bigger organisations profit from the delivery of public services
- A bigger private sector
- A society where those communities and individuals who are most able to help themselves thrive, whilst others don't
- A way of masking or excusing/avoiding the impact of broader political and social institutional inequalities.

We then respond in some detail, to questions relating to:

- the impact and consequences of reductions in public expenditure on the vision for the delivery of the Big Society
- the role of and capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver local public services
- possible problems and challenges from increased commissioning of public service provision

If you would like a full copy of our response then please contact your local CVS.

News Update—Provided by the DACVS Commissioning Project

Report the Cuts – It's really important!

So far the number of Devon organisations reporting cuts on the Voluntary Sector Cuts website is relatively low. This is a really important resource which can be used to lobby decision makers in local government and there are more organisations that we know of who have had cuts who haven't entered their details. However if you don't come forward we can't build up a really effective picture. So please **REPORT YOUR CUTS TO THE WEBSITE:** <http://voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk>

Pickles says disproportionate cuts could face 'statutory force'

On 3 March 2011 Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced that he expects local authorities to behave reasonably in the way they manage their relationship with voluntary and community groups. In his speech at NCVO's annual conference, he set out three tests of reasonableness. First, that councils should not pass on disproportionate cuts to local and voluntary groups. Secondly, that they should talk to voluntary and community groups at a very early stage about how services need to change. And thirdly, that they will have to give at least three months' notice about the need to end or alter a grant or other support. The Secretary of State defined disproportionate cuts in his speech as bigger reductions to budgets than they take on themselves. He also gave a commitment to consider giving statutory force to these expectations should local authorities fail to meet them.

Update on the Heath and Social Care Bill

The Health and Social Care Bill has commenced its journey through Parliament and is currently at the Public Bill Committee stage. You can follow its progress including the debates taking place in Committee at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/health/110308/pm/110308s01.htm>

NHS - Any Willing Provider Interim Report

The Cooperation and Competition Panel have been asked to review the operation of the 'Any Willing Provider' provision in the NHS to identify how it is being implemented by Primary Care Trusts. The study indicates that there is still a lack of choice for many service users and a number of barriers to organisations (including VCS organisations) that want to provide services alongside the traditional statutory sector providers. If you are interested, you can download the document from: http://www.ccpnel.org.uk/content/cases/Operation_of_any_willing_provider_for_the_provision_of_routine_elective_care_under_free_choice/110224_AWP_Interim_Assessment_Final.pdf

National Personal Budget Survey

A national survey is being carried out to find out how personal budgets and direct payments are working across England. The questionnaire is for anyone who has a personal budget or a direct payment or for their unpaid carers. The survey can be accessed at [http://www.in-control.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-evaluation/national-personal-budget-survey-\(poet\).aspx](http://www.in-control.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-evaluation/national-personal-budget-survey-(poet).aspx) You might want to pass this on to any organisations that you know which are currently delivering services to personal budget holders. The survey is quite short and easy to complete.



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Call Kate Shanahan
01237 420130**

TORRIDGE RESOURCE CENTRE INCORPORATING VOLUNTARY ACTION AND VOLUNTEERING - Provides practical support, advice and information to any organisation, activity or self-help group working or wishing to work within the voluntary/community sector. Enables local people of all ages to become involved in a range of voluntary activities and links people and groups who need practical help with those volunteers able to give it. Develops the voice of the voluntary/community sector in decision-making on local and countywide issues. Contact: JENNY FISH on 01237 420131 OR BARBARA GRANT on 01237 420138 OR VOLUNTARY VOICE on 01237 420133.

TAW & TORRIDGE CARING – Offers advice, information, practical and emotional support to local carers and their support groups. Contact: SUE PIRRIE 01237 459337

CAREWISE – Supports the needs of Young Carers. Through the use of trained volunteers, a range of practical skills and emotional support is made available to any young person with a caring responsibility. It also helps to encourage Young Carers to articulate their concerns and to find appropriate ways of supporting these. Contact: CATHY KINGHAM 01237 479380

TORRAGE - Incorporating the Neighbourhood Links Project, provides services and support for older people in Torrridge. Contact ANNA MALONE Development Worker, or LINDA BEALEY Volunteer Co-ordinator on 01805 622666.

FAMILY CARERS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES— Supporting Forums for Family Carers of Adults with Learning Difficulties. Contact: LAURA CLEMENTS ON 01237 420137

TTVS is an accredited Volunteer Centre, a Member of Volunteering England, NCVO, and NAVCA and is an Approved Provider with the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

Bideford Resource Centre — 14 Bridgeland Street, Bideford open Monday to Thursday 10am to 3pm

Torrington Volunteer Centre — 22 Cornmarket Street, Torrington open Thursday morning 10am to 1pm

Holsworthy—Find us at Holsworthy Memorial Hall every Wednesday Morning and look out for outreach opportunities in the local area

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