



Annual Review 2014 - 2015



A word from our Chair, Lynne Bennett

Welcome to WVA's annual report, which includes the strategic report on our activities, and allows us to reflect on some of our highlights.

This last year was not without challenging moments. It has been rewarding, exciting and at times frustrating. Over the last year we have made changes to our Board composition and we have spent much effort re-structuring. We have seen funding streams ending, while demand for services continue. We will therefore be seeking alternative approaches so that we can keep providing services to the local voluntary and community sector.

Despite the pressures, I have been impressed by the continuing efforts that staff at WVA have made to support the sector over the last period. We thank all our staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment and our partners for their confidence, contribution and engagement. We are proud of the work we have done, and remain optimistic.



Communications: Highlights

There are over

1,157

VCS
Organisations
on our database



One of our most important core services involves disseminating relevant updates and information to the sector. As the voice of the voluntary sector, a key role is to keep charities and groups updated with local, regional and national news, events & policies that effect them.



E-bulletins
sent



Supporting Groups Case Study: Footsteps

Footsteps are a charity based in Warrington with the aim to support families and individuals who are affected by someone else's use of alcohol and drugs. During the year, staff accessed various support in order to develop the sustainability of their service:

'Futureproofing' the organisation...

3 members of staff attended WVA's 'Futureproof' conference in June. The event focused on practical advice and strategies to develop an effective and sustainable service. After attending the event, Footsteps decided to gather material for an impact report, which they could distribute to funders and other stakeholders to demonstrate the value of their service. They organised interviews with volunteers, clients, and partners, to gather meaningful testimonials and evidence for their first impact report.

"We now think about the impact of everything we do, and how best to record this so everybody finds out how important the service is, and how it should keep going!"

Finding funding...

Footsteps had previously been unsuccessful with an application to the Morgan Foundation. The team then accessed funding support from WVA, as we have a good working knowledge of the funder, and are well placed to act as a 'critical friend'. Following various meetings, a successful bid was submitted. The new youth project is going extremely well and on target, currently supporting 28 young people and their families. Obtaining funding for this project has widened the reach of the charity and increased local partnership work.

WVA staff also worked closely with Footsteps to secure funding from the People's Health Trust, to provide an outreach service located from Fairfield and Howley, supporting an increased number of local families affected by drugs and alcohol over the next 2 years.

Develop yourself as a Leader...

In June 2014, Footsteps' Volunteer Coordinator Helen attended WVA's leadership course:

"I wanted to do the Leadership training, as I felt I could take a more active role in leading on a project for my organisation to build our small team's capacity for future work. The tutors created a very supportive, creative environment within our group, which enabled us to recognise and experience leadership qualities in each other. I came away from the course feeling inspired and more confident to put my skills into practice "

Securing a future...

In 2014, Footsteps' contract went out to tender, the organisation used the experience and knowledge of WVA, by taking up the offer of our 'critical friend' service. Sometimes, what seems obvious is often missed in applications, talking to someone with an objective view and a good understanding of what commissioners are looking for is invaluable. The good news for Footsteps is they were awarded the contract to continue their much needed service across the borough.

Support Case Studies:

Volunteer Management

Warrington & Halton NHS Trust involve volunteers in a number of supporting roles, such as meeter's and greeters, hospital buddies and through PALS. The hospital's Volunteer Manager attended the WVA Introduction to Volunteer Management course, to help identify ideas of how the current programme could be improved and ensure good practice.

The main area of focus was the policies and procedures of the current volunteer programme, taking into consideration the wider policies and processes of the hospital.

Role descriptions were made less formal and written in plain language to give an accurate picture of what would be expected of volunteers. The impact of this has been volunteers are better informed about the various roles and expectations before registering an interest. This has led to an effective recruitment process, saving time and resources for the hospital.

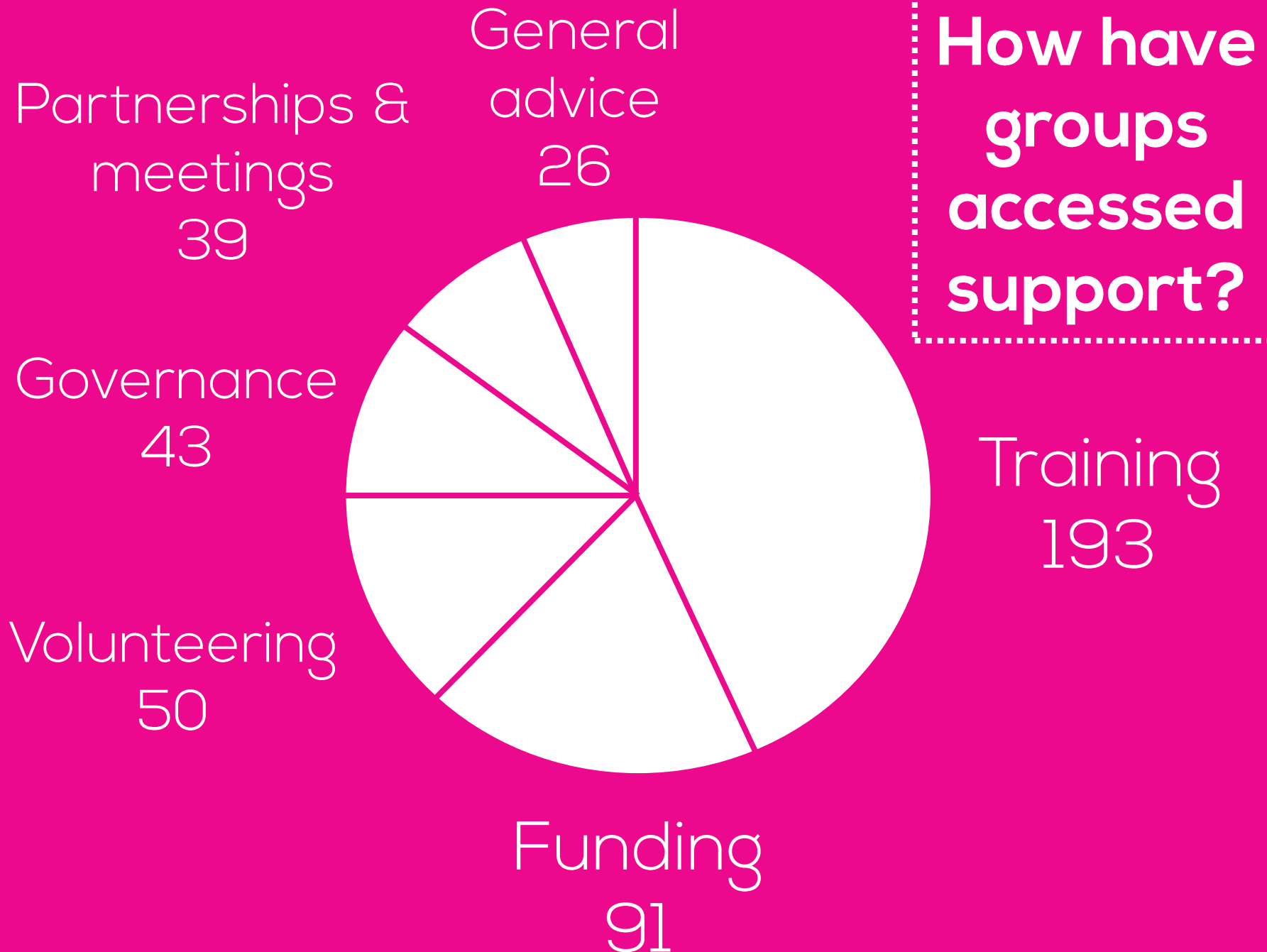
The training also resulted in policies for communicating and electronic data sharing being reviewed, resulting in a comprehensive volunteer database. These small simple changes made a big difference to the hospital's recruitment processes. Streamlining these procedures has allocated more time to the actual training, support and recognition of the volunteers.



ospital

Supporting Groups: Highlights

Total number of groups supported → **351**



A child in a red long-sleeved shirt is painting a large yellow sheet of paper on the floor. The child is using a paint roller to apply blue paint. There are other paint trays and brushes around, including a yellow tray with pink paint and a red tray with red paint. The background shows the legs of other children and a white wall.

Support Case Studies: Governance

The aim of Warrington Parents and Carers Forum (WarrPAC) is to represent the voice of parents and carers looking after children with a disability at a strategic level in the town.

WarrPAC approached WVA for advice on how to manage the workload across the Parent Representative Group. An initial meeting highlighted a need to address governance issues in particular policies and procedures. It was agreed that the best way forward would be series of bespoke sessions delivered by WVA to help them develop their governance and more importantly achieve their aims.

Through the delivery of these sessions, the group were supported to create a new delivery model. Working with WVA, the group identified the need to develop and increase their membership enabling them to gather information, knowledge and experiences from local families. It was decided that the organisation would be two tiers, with the volunteer members feeding their information up to the representatives on the strategic group. The group also adopted a plan to make better use of their existing connections and partnerships and seek advocates from external groups to feed back to the WarrPAC strategic group.

In addition to these bespoke sessions, the group also gained advice about running their AGM, employing staff, and revising their constitution. As a result, the constitution was updated following a vote at the AGM, and the group continues to action the operational changes to become a more effective representative body.



Grassroots Grants Scheme

This year we opened the Grassroots Grants. Following two years of communications with solicitors and liquidators, the Charity Commission authorised the original CVS Grassroots Endowment Fund to be managed by Warrington Voluntary Action as the 'Warrington Grassroots Scheme', the objects of this scheme are to provide grant funding and capacity building support to small community and voluntary organisations across Warrington to continue or expand their work, including activities, community voice and service provision for local people.

The WVA Board of Trustees were aware that the funding donated to the original endowment fund was predominantly from Birchwood agencies, and for this reason WVA agreed to open out the funding to the East of Warrington before widening across the town as per the Charity Commission ruling. In this first year the Grassroots Scheme distributed £6k to seven groups located across the East, funding a wide range of projects from dance classes and lighting to re-cycle bins and table-tennis tables.

Warrington Volunteering Research 2014: Key Findings

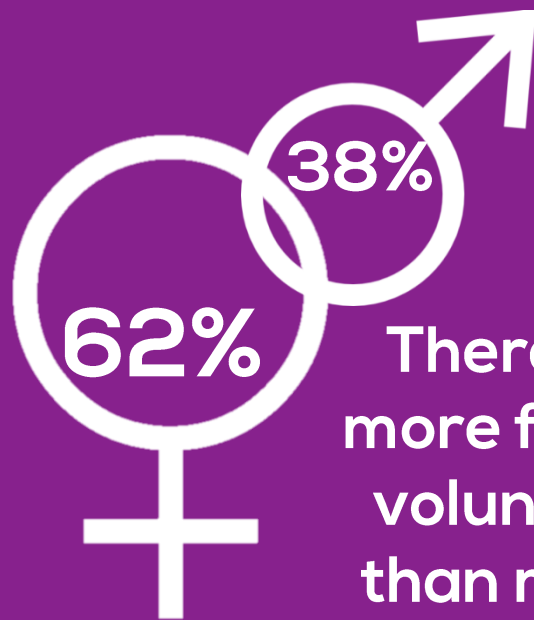
64% of organisations offer their volunteers formal training



Applying national statistics, we can boast an estimated

44,254 people

involved in volunteering activity during the year. This figure includes both formal and informal roles across all sectors



71% volunteer up to



hours per week

75% volunteer at least once a week

Volunteering Case Study: Community Learning Champions

Community Learning Champions (CLC) is an umbrella term for volunteers who help adults to access learning in their communities. Volunteer Champions are recruited to support those who are less likely to get involved with learning independently.

This year, the CLC project was piloted in Warrington, the main aim being to recruit a team of Volunteer Champions who would develop an infrastructure for supporting Warrington's adult learners. WVA were instrumental in designing a working model for the CLC volunteering programme, including recruitment, the creation of a training package, ongoing one to one support for volunteers, and a communications strategy for marketing and promotion of the programme. As well as facilitating 6 weekly catch up meetings where the Champions could share news and collaborate.

Following their training, the Champions were placed with host organisations who were key partners in Warrington's adult community learning provision, with the following results.

The 'Data and Research Champions' placed at WVA updated the Warrington learning directory, they also set up social media accounts in order to promote opportunities digitally across the town.

The 'Administration Champions' based with Warrington Collegiate created a 'Current Learners Database', in order to capture up to date contact information about learners who have accessed courses, and those who have registered an interest.

The 'Mentoring Champions', based with the Walton Lea Partnership and Warrington Disability Partnership, made links with key stakeholders, including voluntary groups and community centres. This has resulted in more community residents and service users finding out about learning opportunities. These champions also provided one to one support for potential learners with very low confidence.

The Volunteer Champions involved in the pilot programme all gained valuable skills and knowledge, particularly around how to support people to get involved in their local community. Supported by WVA, the volunteers developed a real passion for helping people, and most are still volunteering with their host organisations. One volunteer was so inspired through the CLC programme, she has decided to pursue a career in Adult Community Learning, and is applying for PGCE and FE courses at local colleges and universities.

Make Your Volunteering Count!

Training Warrington's Volunteers

The WVA Training Team have always been dedicated to providing meaningful courses for voluntary sector staff and volunteers in Warrington. In light of the results from the volunteer mapping research, and following consultation with volunteers, it was decided that the well established 'Introduction to Volunteering' course should be revamped.

Volunteer research indicates there are approximately 44,000 active volunteers in Warrington. The new course would aim to support these volunteers; whether they had just started their role, or have been serving their group for a long time. So 'Introduction to Volunteering' became 'Make Your Volunteering Count!'

The aims of this new course include

- Gaining a broader understanding of working with the public. Specifically, how to support clients of the service as the demand for charities and voluntary organisations increases. . This module asks the volunteers to consider who they are working with, including how to appropriately meet the service users' needs.
- An increased awareness of Warrington's voluntary and public services to facilitate effective signposting. volunteers in the community are in a unique position to support 'hard to reach' clients, and inform them of services to best suit their needs.

- A broader understanding of the impact of volunteering, specifically how your contribution supports Warrington's health and wellbeing. The work of volunteers is vital to a thriving and healthy community. Key strategies and policies are drawn upon enabling volunteers to identify how they really make a difference to the wider community.
- Progression is a key aim, and runs through the entire course. Volunteers are encouraged to think of how they could enhance their role to further benefit their community, and their own personal skills.

Feedback has highlighted, that long serving volunteers gained a new confidence and realisation of the positive impact they have on their communities. New volunteers have been inspired to make the most of their role, and had a better understanding of the importance of volunteering.

All volunteers who have accessed the course have been motivated to develop their roles in order to support more people in their communities, including developing and maintaining an effective social media presence, accessing WVA's befriending course, and researching funding streams to meet the emerging needs of their communities.

Training, workshops & masterclasses : Highlights



Sessions included

- Meet the Funders: Lloyds Foundation & People's Health Trust
- Becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Develop Yourself as a Leader
- Impact Measurement
- Introduction to Befriending
- Leasing Properties
- Futureproof your Organisation

193

Local groups
were
represented



Sessions
were
delivered
this year



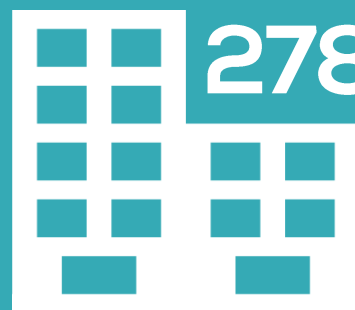
People attended

Working in Partnership: Building Better Opportunities

This year, the Big Lottery partnered with the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise partnership to match the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020. The funding is titled 'Building Better Opportunities', and aims to invest in local projects and partnerships tackling the root causes of poverty, and promoting social inclusion.

The funding allocated to Cheshire and Warrington is £11 million over a period of 4 years. WVA worked in partnership with infrastructure organisations across Cheshire to ensure charities and community groups were well informed of the Building Better Opportunities programme.

This partnership managed the programme development activity, in order to establish a database of groups who were interested in the fund, and to distribute information. Through a secondment of a member of staff, WVA had overall responsibility for coordinating and facilitating a series of information events and workshops relating to the upcoming funding. This was an opportunity to ensure WVA was at the forefront of consulting and engaging with groups across Cheshire and Warrington.



278 organisations
on the
database (one
third from
Warrington)

9,191
people
received
information
about BBO



251
organisations
attended
events

6

lead organisations
supported with
developing initial
partnerships



Partnership work with HMP Risley and Thorn Cross 'Transforming Rehabilitation; Strategy for Reform'

This new national strategy aims to encourage the public, commercial and voluntary sectors to work together and deliver 'what works' to reduce reoffending. The emphasis is keeping offenders engaged, changing negative behaviours and providing the motivation to work, developing positive relationships and constructive lifestyles. In 2014, WVA secured funding to run an 18-month pilot at both HMP Risley and HMP Thorn Cross, to help meet some of the aims of the strategy.

The Thorn Cross project involved the recruitment of a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator to recruit, train and support a team of Volunteer Mentor's. During the first 12 months our Volunteer Co-ordinator recruited 36 volunteers, 7 of whom are ex-offenders

The role of the Volunteer Mentors is to offer 1-2-1 support to prisoners during their sentence and on release. Support is offered by creating individual resettlement support plans where volunteers and mentors can agree on a bespoke support package to help prisoner's 'through the gate' and reduce the chance of re-offending.

The project also involves recruiting and supporting volunteers for other roles within the prison, including gardening and growing fresh produce, helping out in the creche' during visiting times, supporting prisoners with a new furniture restoration project and many more opportunities.

Delivery at HMP Risley has a different perspective, providing a voluntary and sector co-ordinator within the prison, with the aim of encouraging effective and meaningful engagement with the sector. The project has enabled us to build better links with HMP Risley and provided the prison with a wider network of partners and a range of actions to improve the effectiveness of services through the gate.

WVA has been working alongside established recovery approaches that already run within the prison and helped to implement new activities. This has included linking in with Credit Unions and groups supporting children, young people and families as part of a Family Forum.

Another area of work has been to collect data and prisoner experiences of service access, providing intelligence required to identify gaps in services to meet the needs of the prisoners, with an overall aim of reducing re-offending.



Warrington Timebank

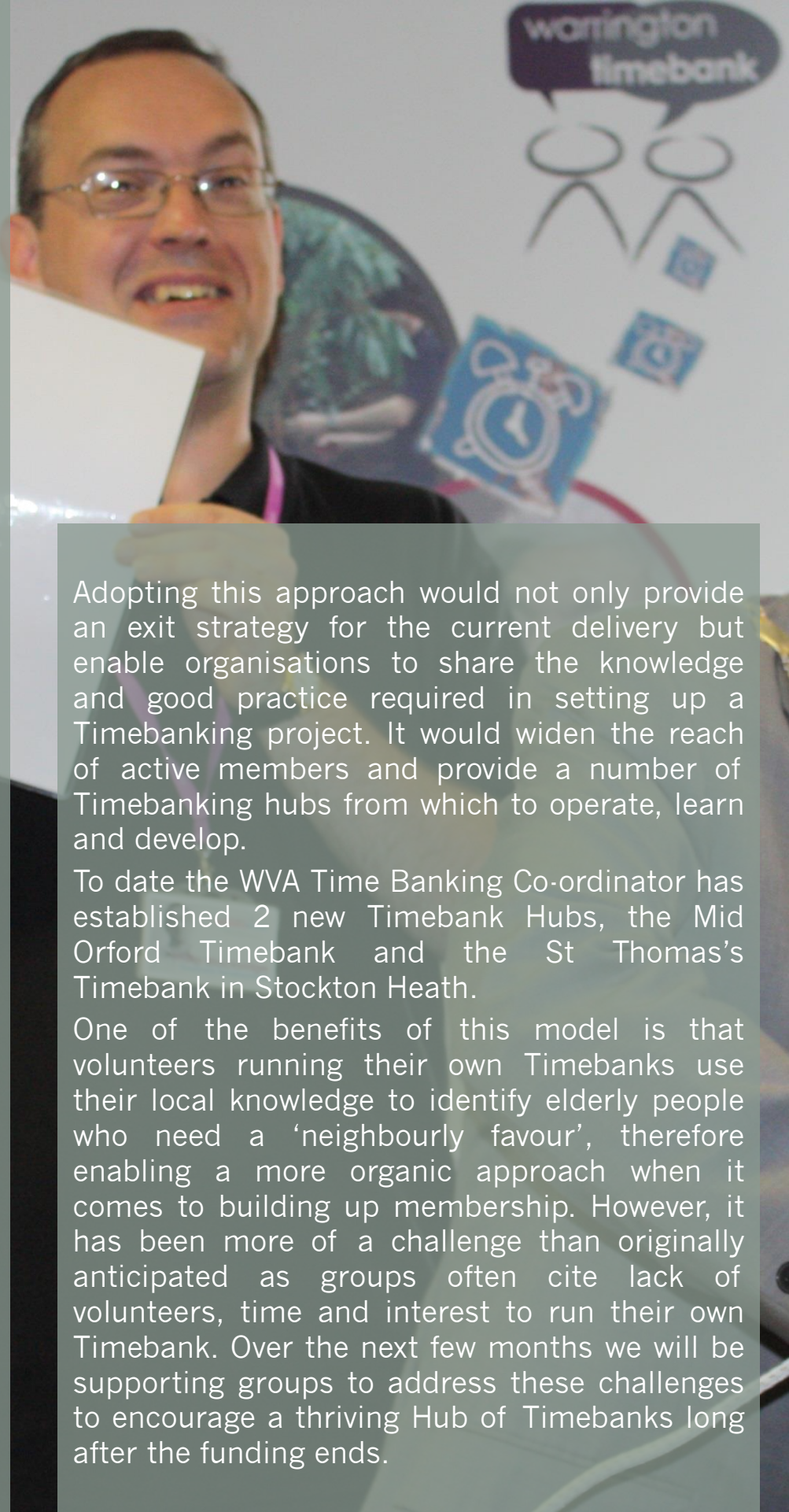
The aim of Timebank is to develop a flexible tool that increases community cohesion, improves health and wellbeing, and contributes to the reduction of health inequalities in the borough

How it works is really quite simple, members use the special currency of the Timebank called 'time credits' to purchase 'favours' from other members. The scheme has been successful in offering respite for carers, and companionship for isolated older people.

Timebank members have earned back their time credits by:

- Offering a 'sitting service' to local carers in need of a respite break
- Doing 'odd jobs' for other members
- Helping out at a luncheon club
- Promoting the Timebank at local medical centres
- Meeting separately to form a 'keep fit social circle'.

After 2 successful years, it was important to develop an exit strategy for the final year of the project which is due to end August 2015. We revised the service to establish a number of mini- Timebanking hubs linked to established organisations or projects. To address 'Closing the Gap' the focus would be on the inner-wards, and support residents identified as vulnerable or socially isolated. However, as previous work has identified this will still provide a catalyst to engage members from across the borough and of all demographics.



Adopting this approach would not only provide an exit strategy for the current delivery but enable organisations to share the knowledge and good practice required in setting up a Timebanking project. It would widen the reach of active members and provide a number of Timebanking hubs from which to operate, learn and develop.

To date the WVA Time Banking Co-ordinator has established 2 new Timebank Hubs, the Mid Orford Timebank and the St Thomas's Timebank in Stockton Heath.

One of the benefits of this model is that volunteers running their own Timebanks use their local knowledge to identify elderly people who need a 'neighbourly favour', therefore enabling a more organic approach when it comes to building up membership. However, it has been more of a challenge than originally anticipated as groups often cite lack of volunteers, time and interest to run their own Timebank. Over the next few months we will be supporting groups to address these challenges to encourage a thriving Hub of Timebanks long after the funding ends.

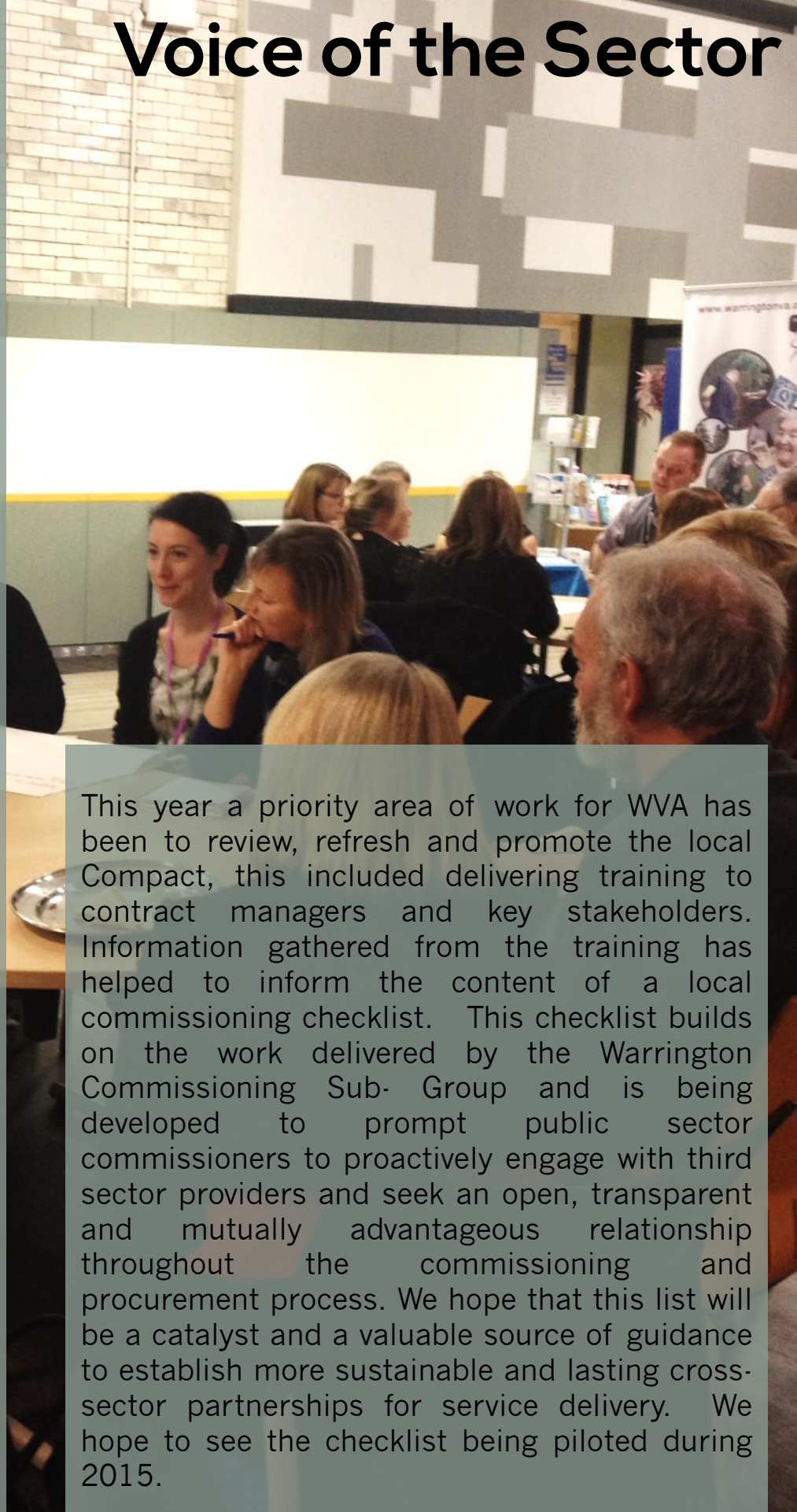
Voice of the Sector

WVA continues to play a key role in ensuring the third sector has a strong and collective voice, enabling groups to raise the issues affecting their service users and members. We do this by acting as a conduit, providing information in both directions with policy makers and commissioners. We are committed to fulfilling our role in ensuring that there is voluntary sector representation on a range of partnership boards and decision-making meetings. WVA staff represent the sector on many boards, this year representation from WVA has included:

- Warrington Partnership
- Cheshire & Warrington LEP
- Third Sector Policy Group
- Commissioning Sub Group
- Compact Implementation Group
- 3rd Sector JCP Liaison Group
- Cheshire & Warrington LEP
- Dementia Action Alliance
- Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner
- Go-On Warrington
- & many more...

Providing leadership for the Voluntary and Community Sector, promoting volunteering across the borough, supporting voluntary organisations to function more effectively and championing partnership work for the benefit of our residents are key aims of WVA. To achieve them in 2014/15 we set out to work with local commissioners to ensure that there is a fair environment in which the sector can access opportunities to provide services to local people.

This year a priority area of work for WVA has been to review, refresh and promote the local Compact, this included delivering training to contract managers and key stakeholders. Information gathered from the training has helped to inform the content of a local commissioning checklist. This checklist builds on the work delivered by the Warrington Commissioning Sub-Group and is being developed to prompt public sector commissioners to proactively engage with third sector providers and seek an open, transparent and mutually advantageous relationship throughout the commissioning and procurement process. We hope that this list will be a catalyst and a valuable source of guidance to establish more sustainable and lasting cross-sector partnerships for service delivery. We hope to see the checklist being piloted during 2015.





A word from our Chief Officer, Alison Cullen

This year WVA conducted an organisational review and agreed the following strategic priorities:-

- To strengthen the reputation of WVA as the sector leader and trusted local voice of the third sector and to be recognised as the first point of call in matters related to the community and voluntary sector.
- To build a strong evidence base and clearly outline the impact of WVA ensuring we measure outcomes for individuals, organisations and the wider community.
- To be recognised as an organisation that puts service users first and encourages and supports the development of groups in resourcing activities rather than WVA competing to deliver front line services.
- To ensure that the Charity is a high performing and well governed body meeting local demand and priorities.

These priorities build on our organisational strengths, identified gaps and accountability to stakeholders.

Looking through this annual review I'm confident the document highlights how we strive to achieve our strategic priorities, and that we continue to make real progress as a key player in the town, with a staff team that is both experienced and enthusiastic.

Like many other charities we have found this year a period of challenge and change, we have had to streamline our activities by making effective use of limited resources and unfortunately reduced staff numbers. However, even in these times of austerity we have embraced new ways of delivering much needed services and work collaboratively with partners old and new. As always I remain committed to making our service the best it can be, focusing on the needs of local people and the organisations we work with across the borough.

Warrington VoluntaryAction

Engaging People
Empowering Communities

Need support? Get in touch!

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