

RCVYS Development Worker's Report - 2007 - 2008

My first full year as RCVYS Development Worker has seen me grow more fully into the role, both in my understanding of many of the national and local strategic issues, and in my ability to apply that understanding for the benefit of many of the VCF sector groups and organisations here in Reading.

Over the last year, we've seen a noticeable increase in the number of policies, schemes and programmes that the VCF sector has had the opportunity to be consulted on, and involved in their planning and delivery. This has led to increasing pressures on the capacity of those of us fortunate enough to be able to engage with these issues, as well as the amount of paperwork and background reading involved in being able to properly fulfil our responsibilities in this area. Consequently, the importance of expanding the number of RCVYS Representatives willing to serve in this manner is increasingly important. This will enable us to better increase our influence upon the latest strategic agendas and to better serve the VCF sector, and ultimately the children and young people we work with here in Reading.

I will endeavour to use this year's Development Worker's Report to briefly highlight some of the key areas that I've been giving my time to over the year. Obviously, I can't go into an enormous amount of detail here, but if you would like to find out more about any aspect of my work, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and Reading Children's Trust

This year, the CYPSP has been almost totally dominated by the Logic Modelling Process and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) Refresh. We have also seen the end of the CYPSP, the beginning of Reading Children's Trust, and preparations for the forthcoming Joint Area Review (JAR).

The Logic Modelling Process has looked at establishing strategic priorities for Reading's children and young people, and to determine programmes and activities to achieve them in a logically planned way. The 3 identified priorities are:

- *Children and Young People who are happy coping with change and challenge*
- *Children and Young People who are enthusiastic and skilled learners*
- *Children and Young People who value themselves and others*

Through these priorities, the key areas of parenting, emotional well-being and school attainment were identified as themes for future work and investment.

The CYPP Refresh has seen a few small amendments with a couple of additions, and will provide the basis of the full review this year. The CYPP is available to download via Local Links in the Links page of the RCVYS website (www.rcvys.org.uk).

Reading Children's Trust came into effect from the beginning of March, replacing the CYPSP and fulfils the government's requirements for Children's Trust status.

Over the last few months, many of Reading's frontline services for children and young people have been moved into locality-based Children's Action Teams. We have been actively involved in representing the VCF sector on each of the Locality Steering Groups, which provides a voice for the sector on the strategic direction and operational implementation of these new teams.

Preparations have begun for the Joint Area Review (JAR). This is an OFSTED inspection of the way that the different agencies within the Children's Trust work together for the benefit of children, young people and their families. One of the initial elements that RCVYS Members may have come across was the initial consultation survey. It is anticipated that as part of the JAR, 4 VCF sector organisations will be interviewed and potentially visited by inspectors.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)/Information Sharing Agreement (ISA)/ContactPoint

The Common Assessment Framework is a method of addressing the multiple needs of children and young people in a multi-agency manner, both in terms of assessing their needs in a holistic way and in being able to open up the referral process to all agencies. It also requires workers to share information with each other about the children and young people they're working with, in accordance with the Information Sharing Agreement.

I have now taken over as the Designated Officer for CAF in the VCF sector here in Reading, and have put into place an e-mail communications group so that those people from VCF groups who've completed CAF Training can receive updates about the CAF process and have a method by which they can address any issues that may arise.

As a part of this role, I've also trained as a CAF Trainer, and have delivered CAF Training and CAF Refresher Training to several multi-agency groups. Assessment Skills Training will start to be delivered from September 2008.

This year has also seen Andrea King move on from her role as CAF Manager, and after a period of time, a new team was put in place, led by Dianne Coleman-Rouse. This new team has been busy addressing many of the issues and concerns, including the big question of exactly how many CAFs and actually in progress.

Other issues addressed over the year include the government's decision to purchase a national E-CAF computer package for implementation in 2009, and many agencies starting to use CAF as their primary referral tool.

ContactPoint, previously known as the Information Sharing Index, is the name for the government's national database of every child and young person in the country, and a register of some basic information about them and which agencies are working with them. ContactPoint will go live for all areas of the country in April 2009. I have written a briefing paper for the RCVYS Exec, and we will be ensuring that VCF organisations are represented in the plans for its implementation here in Reading, and have the opportunity to be trained to access ContactPoint.

Children's Workforce Development and other training opportunities

Working as part of a small team, I helped put together the successful bid for the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) Workforce Strategy Partners' Programme. This programme is worth £20k each year for 3 years 'to ensure that local integrated children's workforce strategies address and meet the needs of providers of children's services in the Third and Private Sectors'.

In practice, this means that in addition to the work we're already doing at a strategic level on management, training, recruitment, and integrated working, we will be working on the following key aspects for those on the ground:

- A **mapping and research project** to determine the training needs of groups within the VCF sector.
- **Common Core Induction Toolkit** - This will provide everyone that works with children and young people with the opportunity to access a range of common core training modules e.g. Health and Safety, First Aid, Child Protection etc.
- Expansion of the **RCVYS Training Bursary** to provide funding for training for volunteers and staff of VCF groups that work with children and young people.
- Signposting and developing opportunities for **further personal and professional development**.

The mapping and research project will be carried out between April and June, and the results will be presented at the RCVYS AGM at the end of June.

I have also been involved in the re-design and re-launch of the RCVYS Training Bursary, and have been promoting it in a variety of different settings and forums.

Over the last year I have been pro-active in continuing to negotiate access to a whole range of different training courses with a variety of partner agencies.

RCVYS Development

This year has seen us welcome 18 new groups and organisations as RCVYS Members, as well as developing new relationships with several other groups. I have also designed the new RCVYS branding and marketing identity, produced display boards and have purchased printed stationery. This year has also seen us re-start a quarterly RCVYS Newsletter. I have recently dedicated some of my time to creating a new website for RCVYS (www.rcvys.org.uk), that will help us to develop our profile and to communicate more effectively with both RCVYS Members, and the wider VCF sector here in Reading. This will be launched at the RCVYS AGM at the end of June.

I have provided admin support to the RCVYS Exec by producing agendas and notes from RCVYS Exec and Reps meetings, and organising and convening the RCVYS Open Meetings during the year. In addition, I have produced several initial briefing papers for the RCVYS Exec and Reps on major new initiatives such as ContactPoint, the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the new Allegations Management Guidance. Additionally, I've produced position statements on local

developments such as Locality Working, as well as guidance on VCF sector representation on Locality Steering Groups.

Other Projects

This year has seen the final completion of the video project. This project was intended to provide an opportunity for several different groups of 'hard to reach' young people to have their say on what's important to them. This was produced in the strategic context of the implementation of the government's Every Child Matters agenda. We have used this video to take their views to several high profile council officers and local civic leaders.

Along with RVA and Community Action West Berkshire, RCVYS became a member of the BACYP led consortium bid to V (the national youth volunteering charity) to deliver the National Youth Volunteering Programme here in Reading and West Berkshire. This was successful and has seen us work together to identify new opportunities for young people to get involved in volunteering in this area.

A large project over the last year has seen me work closely with Reading Borough Council to promote and support the implementation and delivery of the Youth Opportunities Fund/Youth Capital Fund (YOF/YCF) in the VCF sector here in Reading. This involved me working with many different VCF sector groups, which resulted in 27 different applications being submitted over the year. For the 2007-2008 financial period, Reading's YOF/YCF budget was allocated to 65 successful bids, 37 (57%) of which came from VCF groups. Just over ⅓ of the total budget (approximately £130,000) was allocated to VCF groups. Our work with VCF groups in the YOF/YCF process here in Reading has recently received recognition from the South East Youth Partnership and GOSE, and has been included in their YOF/YCF Compendium of Good Practice.

The government have decided to continue YOF/YCF for another 3 years until 2011, which is excellent news for Reading. Consequently, I have also worked with Tom Woolmer and his team on amending the criteria and application form for the next year's funding in an effort to make it easier for young people to complete, and to ensure that the requirements of the fund are adhered to.

Together with Laura Johnson Collard, I was involved in discussions around the Play Strategy project and the associated Big Lottery bid. This project was designed to provide play opportunities for children between the ages of 7 and 13 here in Reading. The bidding process was very competitive, with 11 bids being received from VCF sector groups and 5 bids from RBC groups. A total of just over £1m was applied for, with VCF groups applying for approximately 70% of the money. 4 bids from VCF groups and 2 bids from RBC groups were accepted, with VCF groups being allocated £109,436.02 (38%) and RBC groups being allocated £179,750.00 (62%). These projects are now being delivered.

Throughout the last 12 months, I have been involved in the Publicising Positive Activities (PPA) project, as part of the Youth Offer in 2008. One of the biggest problems almost constantly cited in trying to engage young people in positive activities, is that they don't know what's available for

them to do. The aim of the project is to develop a means for young people to discover what activities are going on, where and when they happen, and to provide them with a means to find out more.

The project was split into 2 parts:

- a research exercise to determine what young people currently do in their spare time, what they want to do in their spare time, and how they want to access this information
- the development of an on-line database to provide details of positive things to do in the Reading area.

The research exercise was very successful an unprecedented 4500 responses being received. This has provided us with accurate information about what activities young people want to do, so that we can provide that information using the database. The on-line database will hopefully go live towards the end of June 2008 at www.readingyouth.com.

As part of a multi-agency team (including Connexions and Reading Borough Council), I helped with the planning and assessment process for the PAYP (Positive Activities for Young People) programme in 2008/2009, particularly in working with and supporting the North area proposals.

I've worked closely with the Extended Schools service to put together a leaflet highlighting the opportunities for VCF groups to get involved with the Extended Schools agenda. This was launched at the CLASS event on October, and has been a useful tool. The final round of area consultations will start in summer 2008.

One of the key strategic opportunities for the wider VCF sector here in Reading was the VCF Sector Showcase as part of the Reading 2020 Annual Meeting in November. I helped to bring together over half of the 50-60 different VCF groups that were represented on the night. Many of the groups that exhibited reported some good conversations with Councillors and statutory sector managers, and valued the opportunity to highlight their work in a strategic context.

Key Tasks for the future

Some of the key tasks planned for the future include:

- Further development of the RCVYS website (www.rcvys.org.uk).
- Developing the number of VCF sector groups and organisations publicising their activities on www.readingyouth.com through the Youth Offer programme.
- Further publicising the RCVYS Training Bursary to ensure that a wide range of VCF sector groups can take advantage of the training and development opportunities through the new integrated children's workforce development agenda.