


# Better Together VCS Forum –5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Action Notes

Agenda Item	Key Issues	Actions/Links
<b>Welcome &amp; introductions</b>	Kate Burrows welcomed everyone to the meeting at DCA. Introductions were made. 12 people attended. Apologies were received from Naomi Stevens, Joanne Appleby, Angela Stevens, Stefan Klidzia, Jenny Wood, Melanie Bear, Phillipa May and Helen Mulhearn.	
<b>Presentation from NE First Credit Union</b>	<p>Jackie Stallard, Business Development &amp; Marketing Officer for North East First Credit Union gave a short presentation on what can be provided through NEFCU providing pathways to financial wellbeing. Jackie covered points including those around life insurance, payroll contributions, volunteers for collection points, loans up to £15,000 and in particular loans below £500 to encourage the avoidance of loan sharks. Details can be found in the attached document.</p> <p>BTF members were asked to consider linking with NEFCU for their employees, service users and events. Jackie agreed she will provide a list of geographical collection points for the NEFCU which can potentially be overlaid with other data linked to poverty. Those wishing to engage with NEFCU can email <a href="mailto:jackie.stallard@nefirstcu.co.uk">jackie.stallard@nefirstcu.co.uk</a></p>	 <p>NEFCU Summary Point Poster.pdf</p> <p><a href="http://www.nefirstcu.co.uk">www.nefirstcu.co.uk</a></p> <p><a href="#">NE First CU Facebook</a></p>
<b>Who is doing what where?</b>	<p>Through recent forum meetings, it has become apparent that some work is necessary to maximise the best use of time and resources and to ensure that the voice of the sector is heard at the table. This work would look at which wider forums and meetings BTF members attend and how contributions to and information from those meetings can be best shared with others across the VCS.</p> <p>To focus that work, Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well are considered to be appropriate placeholders, recognising that although health underpins many of the key drivers, the agenda is much wider.</p> <p>A good discussion on this ensued and the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a method of more robust information sharing is required.</li> <li>• a voxpop model of key information from each meeting could be a useful tool for this purpose</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that during the BTF meetings, there should be space to review who is attending which meeting and what the key points from those meetings were – with the potential to review what is coming up in the future and where people want to feed in information/issues.</li> <li>• What structures are already there and where does the reporting go from those partnerships?</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that a piece of work to review these meetings and who attends them will be undertaken, using a proforma developed for Forum members to complete. Alongside this a review of the Forum membership would be a useful exercise.</p>	All to note
<b>Safeguarding Update</b>	<p>A discussion took place prior to the main meeting regarding a question raised at the Adults Safeguarding Group on whether local organisations have enough information to be confident in raising an alert. Both the Adults SG and the Children’s SG have made a call for evidence relating to instances where it is believed that concerns raised by the voluntary sector have not been dealt with appropriately.</p> <p>In addition to further discussion on this topic in the main meeting Abby highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback is welcomed on the Safeguarding Week Events</li> <li>• A course on Toxic Cultures has been arranged by Lesley Jeavons and can be found <a href="#">here</a>. It was suggested a Toxic Culture course is arranged for the sector.</li> <li>• Alzheimers UK have their own national Safeguarding Team and issues are escalated through them and dealt with at a local level as appropriate. Abby/Gavin to discuss further.</li> </ul>	All to note  All to note  AT/GL
<b>Partnership Updates</b>	<p><b>County Durham Partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple consultations by the County Council are ongoing at the present time including the Draft <a href="#">Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</a>; the <a href="#">draft Housing Strategy</a> and the <a href="#">Council’s 2024 – 2028 Plan</a> on which Forum members were encouraged to comment.</li> <li>• The Environment &amp; Climate Change Partnership will be holding an Emergency Summit on 19th March to which members of the Place, Health and Communities/Ecological Emergency/Climate Emergency workstreams are invited.</li> <li>• The Economic Partnership is currently focused on the Inclusive Economic Strategy and developing programmes for the UKSPF and Rural England Fund. A Through the Enterprise Partnership ‘third sector animation’ is being developed to raise awareness of opportunities and best practice on enterprise and challenging innovation.</li> </ul>	All to note

	<p><b>Advice In County Durham &amp; other updates from DCP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AICD are looking to better understand the picture of referral pathways. The County Council are carrying out review of the advice provision which will be a two year project due to the complexity of the programme.</li> <li>• Peter reported that those requiring debt advice are encountering delays in receiving it due to the contraction of service availability, which has led to growth in the number of cases reaching crisis point.</li> <li>• The current Household Support Fund is due to end in March 2024. Some signposting to this is still available. Funding for essentials is still available through CDCF as highlighted in the August minutes.</li> <li>• Resettlement Programme – a recent Government change has obligated County Durham to provide support for asylum seekers and the current system is run through Mears. Forum members were asked to note back to the DCC Resettlement Team if they are noting an increase in asylum seekers requesting support from their individual organisations, or any increases in requests from refugees.</li> </ul> <p><b>Mental Health/County Durham Together and other updates from PCP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Mental Health Transformation – Carole is co-Chair of the County Durham MH Transformation Board who have been evaluating the work of the three-year programme with a view to inform commissioning intentions from April. A recent presentation from Jo Murray will be shared with the BTF which details how transformation money went into the voluntary sector.</li> <li>• The Resilient Community Group which reports to the MH strategy board (and sits alongside the County Durham Together Partnership – continues with ongoing test and learn pilot activity.</li> <li>• Poverty Truth Commission – Successfully secured funding to deliver at least 2 PTCs in County Durham. Will sit as a ‘project of’ the County Durham Together Partnership with separate governance through the establishment of partnership board and operational group to steer the work. DCA will employ the project staff to work with local people and build up a picture of experiences of those living with poverty with the aim of influencing policy and practice.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Information Sharing</b></p>	<p><b>Healthwatch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a recent evaluation has been undertaken in relation to support around Mental Health. Healthwatch are looking for any stories around secondary mental health support in patient care or from MH teams.</li> <li>• a new youth engagement lead is starting in October and is looking for networking links.</li> <li>• The new inclusion lead is making good headway into reviewing support for the farming community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Alzheimer’s Society</b></p> <p>A new role supporting offenders in prison is now established, in addition to a new post supporting veterans. Additionally, a new worker is supporting a young people’s group with the intention of the early</p>	<p>All to note</p>

	identification of Alzheimers. Gavin requested that if anyone is aware of any new groups who would benefit from a Dementia Friends awareness session to get in touch. <a href="mailto:gavin.lee@alzheimers.org.uk">gavin.lee@alzheimers.org.uk</a>	
<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	<p>The date of the next meeting will be <b>Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February at 1.30 p.m.</b> (venue TBC). Following on from the discussion at the October Policy Conference, this will include a discussion with Neil Heckles from the Durham University Fellowship Programme who will be asking Forum members about their future research calls.</p> <p>Dates for the remainder of the year will be circulated by the County Durham Partnership team so that they are noted in diaries for everyone in advance.</p>	