



Support Pathway

Stage one report

January 2017

Summary

The two questions posed for this work were.

1. Whether a consistent core offer can be proposed
2. Whether it would be possible to establish a list of people who can offer expertise in relation to charity and business set up and development either on a paid or voluntary basis, across the county and via stakeholder organisations.

1. This research shows that there is a wide diversity of support offered to organisations. This diversity appears to be a strength and increases the likelihood of there being something suitable for every organisation. The prize is how we make that information accessible. This work does not therefore recommend trying to develop a core offer.

2. It may be possible to establish such a list if we can address the issues highlighted below and this research suggests this is the area on which to focus. The key to success will be how people can search access and interrogate the information available.

Methodology

Due to unforeseen circumstances the research could not be undertaken by St Albans CVS in the timescale required envisaged so has been completed by a trawl of each organisations website by members of the Connect Hertfordshire team with a limited number of follow up calls and emails.

This list is not exhaustive and there are many more organisations which could be added into this work.

31 organisations have been included in this work. 4 National 11 County based and 16 based in localities across Herts.

Not all individual sheets have as yet been shared back with the organisations. Those that have been shared returned with more support logged than gained from the websites.

People reported that they could review and improve the information sent to them in about 20 minutes.

Support has been catalogued by topic areas that an organisation might look for support in e.g. with governance, demonstrating their social value, funding etc. Copy of Master form attached.

Findings

Range

There is a wide range of support available some free and more available through membership arrangements or on a fee basis.

The areas where most support is available are:

- Venues or accommodation 13 offers
- Working with Volunteers 11 offers
- Learning opportunities (Courses and training sessions) 11 offers.
- Setting up a group 10 offers

Least support is offered in the areas of:

- Contracting and trading 3 offers
- Health and Safety 4 offers
- Project management 4 offers

How support offers are delivered

Within each heading there are a wide variety of different offers. For example these range from some which are web based offering standard documents and advice based on National best practice. Others offer support from an advisor. The latter are predominantly local offers.

What is offered?

This is also wide ranging Some offers are for training or a practical service for example in 'Safeguarding' there is training, policies and DBS checking In marketing and communications there is support ranging from developing a communications strategy to an offer to carry free advertising for relevant activities.

The local offers have limited availability. Support with equipment, supplies and venues are predominantly local.

At the other end of the scale support around demonstrating your impact (social value) is currently only available through national (2) and county wide (3) organisations.

Some offers within a given category only apply to organisations with a particular focus. For example those working with people with Alzheimers, children or for sports clubs.

Issues raised by the findings

The diversity of support and organisations outlined above combined with the ever changing nature of that support dependant on organisations funding and training programmes creates a challenge as to how we collate and maintain this information in a way which is useful to those seeking support.

Questions relevant to this are:

What information do we include?

Is this an open information base in which any organisation with something to offer can do so or is it contained to, for example, infrastructure organisations?

Containing it may seem attractive from a management point of view but this would exclude specialist organisations which have discreet but valuable offers. For example Vision 4 Growth is a small sight impairment charity based in Broxbourne who run training for organisations on how to support blind and partially sighted people in their workforce or beneficiary base. Their work has won national recognition but their offer would not be listed for Herts organisations to find if this information base were restricted to infrastructure organisations. The same would apply to much of the safeguarding support.

Peer to Peer support was highlighted as important at a recent new organisations session hosted by Connect Hertfordshire this is not included in the current scope of this work.

The list of organisations included to date does not cover all organisations we know about in Herts let alone those we as yet are unaware of therefore however we move forward needs to be able to flex to include newcomers.

Where do we keep the information and who is responsible for it?

In collating information on the individual organisation pathway sheets the question arose as to how detailed do we make the links? Clearly the more detailed it is the easier it is for organisations to access what they need. However the challenge of updating it centrally becomes enormous.

BEH CVS have been very helpful in discussing this. They suggested that the best way would be for each organisation to take responsibility for their information and have a landing page on their own website which links to this pathway. They think is reasonable to expect organisations to be responsible for their own information and would be prepared to do so.

Alzheimers UK allows any organisation providing support to people with Alzheimers or their families to list those services on their website but expect the organisation posting the information to inform them of changes so the website information can be updated.

Leaving control of individual organisations information with that organisation seems to be in line with general practice elsewhere for example trusted trader type websites and has the advantage of avoiding big updating activities.

This is also in line with the Hertfordshire Directory (HCC website) Organisations send in their own information and are sent reminders annually to check and update their record.

The editing function then becomes manageable. If the data is not updated each year it would be deleted, ensuring only up to date information is included.

On a practical note, an editor would still have to manage the inputting of updates even if there is a form on the website for doing so.)

How do we categorise information in a way which is helpful to organisations seeking support?

This should be informed by the language and results of the needs assessment survey work. Maybe a starting point for developing a tool from this pathway work would be to start with a limited set of areas. For example Sustainability, Demonstrating impact, Grant giving and other funding organisations plus a small number of others (5-6 in total) where either support is harder to find, more diverse or more in demand. This would allow a chance to pilot how we address the issues raised in this report before extending the information base.

Pathway project group response

This report and work has been considered by the pathway project group which recommends to the steering group that.

We need to explore options on how the access to support can be best accessed and organised.

Simplify access online

Based on the work to date the group is keen to progress work towards establishing an access portal to a free market of support, e.g. a single search engine for the county, through which organisations seeking support can search on criteria based on for example; geography, sector, support needs. It would create a free marketplace with both priced and free services. At the same time organisations offering support would retain the role and responsibility of maintaining the information about what they offer.

To achieve this, the group is keen that this work be agreed as a priority for the Hub in year 2. Its suggestion is that the work be taken forward in the way outlined below based on the following principles.

- That it is kept as simple as possible
- That it is accessible/easy read
- That it is sustainable (e.g. part of the Hertfordshire Directory or other system with ongoing funding.)
- That it is low maintenance. This could be achieved by organisations being responsible for their own information and removed if they do not update it.
- Low cost / affordable
- An infrastructure needs to be put in place to moderate
- Start with a question and design from a client focused rather than a supplier focus
- Selective rather than all-inclusive and risk of growing over large.

- Quality built in - Feedback mechanisms (e.g. start rated reviews or “did you get the service you wanted” prompts)

Next steps

- Feedback on current Pathway report to steering group 25 Jan
- Wider discussion and ask steering group to agree the working group recommendation
- If this is agreed by the steering group and Herts CC then the working group suggest convening to define the criteria and create a specification
- The Pathway working group would then undertake a look at the options available. This would include:
 - What current possible platforms exist.
 - Development of the criteria
 - Technical spec
 - Mock up versions
 - Testing and refinement.
 - Finally whole hub promotion of the available resource.

Other areas to explore in overcoming barriers to accessing support:

- Promotion of forums and networks (including in the new Marketplace)
- Link in to the work presented at the voluntary sector conference on networks and local community welcome hubs
- Mentoring and one to one support – explore possibility of extending training programmes to empower and enable existing providers to increase the range of expert support available

Appendix 1 – Included organisations.

Age UK

Alzheimer's UK

Ascend

Broxbourne and East Herts CVS

CDA (Community Development Action) Herts

Community Action Hertsmere

Community Action Dacorum

Herts Citizens Advice Services (HCAS)

Herts Community Foundation

Herts County Council

Herts Inter faith Forum

Herts Mind Network

Herts Sports Partnership

Letchworth Centre

Mind in Mid Herts

North Herts (incl Stevenage) CVS

North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

NCVO

Pro Action (Children)

Royston and District Volunteer centre

St Albans CVS

Small Charities Coalition

Stephanou Foundation (Domestic abuse)

South Hill Centre

#Team Herts

Three Rivers District Council

Vision 4 Growth

Volunteer Centre Dacorum

Volunteer Centre Broxbourne and East Herts

Welwyn Hatfield CVS

Watford and 3 Rivers Trust