



Southampton Voluntary Services

ANNUAL REVIEW

2019-20

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OUR IMPACT



12100

Interactions with VCSE organisations



70030

People visited our websites



102

New volunteer opportunities promoted



1057

Volunteer enquiries processed



68

Volunteer drop-in sessions



26

Friday Forums and other sector events organised



30

Strategic Partnerships attended to represent your views



51

Groups received intensive community development support



18

Community roots volunteers supported



6

Healthwatch Southampton reports published



836

People shared their experience with Healthwatch



2847

City centre visits enabled by City Shopmobility

NEW BEGINNINGS

JO ASH, CBE



The period covered by this Annual Report, 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020, is most aptly described by the famous Dickensian intro, “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Not a tale of two cities, but for SVS a year of two extremes – with existential questions bookending the start and end of the period, with a brief but happy lull sandwiched in the middle.

So, as in story mode, let us begin at the beginning in April 2019 when SVS, as the lead organisation, was frantically writing its detailed tender and drawing together a complex partnership bid with five formally subcontracted organisations for the Integrated Commissioning Unit’s ‘Community Solutions’ tender, a combined community development and community navigation service contract. A big and complex piece of work, but we made it eventually, or more precisely, with a couple of hours to spare and within three words of the total 10700 word count limit! The following weeks were just as fraught, since it was clear

if we were not successful that SVS’ core voluntary sector support work would end, and so too would our 50+ year umbrella role of voluntary service and support in the city; an existential question of the most profound kind.

So, in the 2 months between submission and contract award decisions, we seasawed between optimism and pessimism, trying to plan both for rapid implementation of a completely new partnership based model if successful, whilst simultaneously contingency planning for eventual closure if not. All the while also continuing to deliver our usual voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector support with swanlike Zen; appearing calm on top whilst paddling furiously beneath the waterline. This brief paragraph on our ‘Great Expectations’ belies the sheer volume of work and huge gamut of emotions expelled by the staff and trustees during this chapter of our year’s tale.

Suffice to say that the decision was awaited with bated breath, and received with joyful relief, when we finally heard our tender had been successful. Throughout the summer we entered a frenetic stage of dealing with legal niceties for subcontracting and collaborative preparations to ensure we were ready to start on 1st October 2019; our minds acutely focused on that date which auspiciously coincided with a CCG initiated TARGET event with a 100+ mass gathering of primary care and voluntary sector colleagues around ‘community solutions’ at which we were to soft launch the new service, followed by a formal launch with our partners by

Cllr Satvir Kaur (SCC Cabinet member lead) and Dr Mark Kelsey (CCG board Chair) as part of SVS AGM three days later.

Thus was the new service SO:Linked heralded into the cityscape under the tagline “Supporting Southampton People and Communities” and with its multicolour six section logo representing the links and connectivity between the six city postcodes SO14 – 19, the six Better Care cluster areas, and the six formally participating VCSE organisations – Spectrum CIL, Solent Mind and Alzheimer’s Society for the navigation element with TWICS and Social Enterprise Link supporting community development work alongside SVS.

Quarter 3 of the SVS year therefore saw the first quarter delivery of the new SO:Linked service start with adjustments to how SVS operates in its next chapter as well as forging new working relationships and shared learning with colleagues from across the whole staff team of all partners and promotion of the new service, brand and website.

The collective SO:Linked team shared their respective ways of working and expertise, focusing on an assets based approach to individual and community development work and adopting a principle of sharing ‘golden nuggets’ of information and joint learning.

Colleagues from the housing sector, advice agencies network, young peoples’ groups, Living Well and other teams were invited to join the whole team meetings to ensure shared understanding of services and build effective links.

We aimed to build steadily and incrementally, so we could embed the new arrangements effectively and consolidate existing good practice under the SO:Linked banner. Promotional activity included connecting with and sending information to key agencies and networks including to MPs and SCC Councillors, Police leadership, Antipoverty or other networks, as well as primary care and secondary health care, social care and the VCSE sector.

We also forged links with the new players on the scene, the Primary Care Networks, which have changed the context of health configuration, as they cover different areas to the established Better Care cluster groups, and also were due to take on defined social prescribing roles which potentially could confuse, or duplicate aspects, of the community navigation service.

Throughout this period the support and encouragement of our lead commissioner, Moraig Forrest-Chard, was much appreciated as the SO:Linked service steadily built up momentum during the first few months and as our newly appointed SO:Linked programme

“Southampton Voluntary Services continue to be a key player and major partner with the City Council on a number of local strategic forums on which I sit like the Health & Wellbeing Board, Safe City Partnership and Southampton Connect. The SVS contributions here are always highly valued. I have been especially impressed by the input from SVS to help address these past two years some really difficult challenges around street homelessness and begging. Looking forward I relish the opportunity for even closer collaboration on some major City Council initiatives such as the Green City Charter, City of Culture bid and maximising the Southampton £. SVS are central to realisation of our ambitions for a strengthened civil society as a critical component of plans for integrated health and social care with a particular emphasis on earlier intervention and prevention.”

CLLR DAVE SHIELDS



Rocio leading a volunteer outreach session

manager, Nicky Judd, who joined just days before the launch, gradually settled into her role. We were then able to refocus a bit more again on other elements of SVS including delivery of Healthwatch Southampton which had continued throughout the year and held its Annual meeting on 18th February, and is reported on in its own annual report from its steering group chaired by Harry Dymond, MBE.

Some urgent work to secure funding for the ongoing sustainability of the Shopmobility service was undertaken and discussions commenced on how this much valued service would go forward under a more integrated transport and accessibility plan. Our Community Roots supported volunteer project, kindly funded by our partners Ideal Collection, welcomed its new co-ordinator Maria Kelly, who had previously been a volunteer mentor with the scheme, and produced a successful harvest whilst planning its winter activities and more dormant spell pending springing back into full blown action in the Springtime – and little did anyone then foresee what challenges that would bring us all in so many ways.

Voluntary sector support and volunteering development work had of course continued throughout the year. Our monthly Friday Forums provided topical updates and information sharing, and individual groups and networks, like the Preschools network, supported on the usual array of governance, policy and sector issues as well as hosting a

NCVO Local Assembly event for the voluntary sector in the city, and wider region, amongst other events.

We continued to have input to bigger city wide agendas such as Better Care health and social care systems reconfiguration, City Safety and Violent Crime Reduction Strategy, Safeguarding children and adults, the Street Homeless Action Group work and also planning for Mayflower 400 commemorations, City of Culture bid preparations and administered a small grants programme with 19 organisations provisionally awarded funds towards VE and VJ events in the city.

Good practice advice and peer support continued to be offered through the Volunteers Co-ordinators group and Volunteer Information Sessions or online website guidance to link potential volunteers with the hundreds of diverse volunteering opportunities active in the city. Thus, SVS held its annual Volunteers Thank You Christmas party and looked forward positively to continuing to build and strengthen its work in 2020.

The new decade began well and we started January looking forward with hope and optimism to further extending the reach of the SO:Linked service.

In early February we had a very positive first quarter monitoring review meeting with Moraig and Adrian Littlemore, who was to take over responsibility as our lead commissioner link from April.

SO:Linked development in hand included work on reviewing options from elsewhere and commencing discussions on potential model ideas for the SO:Good Giving place based giving scheme with Southampton Connect. We actively planned for a series of six 'community conversations' across the city from February to April, celebrating what people value in their local areas in terms of community strengths and assets. These were aimed at building resilience and capacity at a local level including revamping and extending the previously CCG established Local Solution groups under the SO:Linked umbrella.

Of course, at that stage little did we know what was to come as in January 2020 Corona was still the name of a beer brand and the dreaded COVID 19 virus had yet to be fully unleashed upon the world so on 13th and 29th February we held the first of our local events at the Saints pub meeting room Millbrook and Lordshill library, and were ready to go with others when we, along with everyone else, found ourselves cancelling the remaining series of events and then writing a very different and unanticipated last chapter for the final part of this year's report.

The gradual dawning in February and March that this then distant, horrid virus was really serious and about to

fundamentally disrupt our lives and work saw SVS initiate its emergency plan very quickly. We were also invited to meet with SCC and CCG senior staff and emergency planners to link into the citywide multi-agency response to the COVID 19 pandemic and were asked to redirect all our work and attention to supporting local people and VCSE groups through the crisis.

This was in fact the last face-to-face meeting Rob Kurn, Deputy CEO, or I attended prior to lockdown on 23rd March. By virtual means SVS continued to play a role throughout the period of immediate crisis response and beyond that into reboot and recovery modes at a city strategic and operational level, as well as part of the four Local Authorities (Hants, IOW, Portsmouth & Southampton) Local Resilience Forum Protecting Vulnerable People.

SVS dealt with its own service and working arrangements very quickly including pre-lock down shifting most staff to home working, rota only opening of the Voluntary Action Centre, and booked appointment slots for Shopmobility until lock down required full closure of both.

To support the VCSE sector we circulated early briefings and website info on the developing situation – trying to keep up with the rapidly changing Govt

A massive thanks to all who make what we do possible. As funders, supporters, partners, trustees, staff and volunteers your contributions mean we can help some of the most vulnerable people in our City, and continue to Promote Voluntary Action at a time when it is needed more than ever.

Our team of over 50 volunteers have contributed 4064 hours to our cause this year, a remarkable figure, that when costed using median earnings from Office of National Statistics equates to £64,252; a massive contribution and we thank each and every one of you.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



SO:Linked launch event

advice including changing one website post 5 times in one day as the advice constantly altered! We undertook an early survey of VCSE organisations on their immediate needs, wants and services, which was used to completely revamp the SO:Linked website so that it focused on services available to support local people, and organisations across all sectors, during COVID-19.

SVS provided a weekly VCSE sector mailing with latest updates, info on funding available to help during the crisis, service changes, and other help and resources available. We provided briefings on specific topics eg Buildings and Legionella, planning for recovery and risk assessment with templates to support this.

We updated SVS Volunteer guidance and opportunities on our website including remodelling the volunteering brokerage section to make it easier to use. We commissioned videos to help emerging informal volunteer and mutual aid groups with good practice around safeguarding, telephone support and volunteer safety.

We also worked with a local counsellor to produce a video guide to helping people cope with bereavement at this especially difficult time, and linked that with a Southampton Council of Faiths guide to death and dying for each of the main faith communities in the city.

The year covered by this report therefore ended for SVS with a very different kind of speculation about our future existence – as people, as an organisation, and as an integral part of our community together wondering what our new normal would be.

Still, despite the darkest of times there were, and are, bright beacons of hope – the upsurge in community spirit, of spontaneous kindness, mutual aid and volunteering gives us hope that perhaps there is a silver lining from which we can build a legacy of community resilience, support and capacity.

Where people and place are valued as much as productivity and profit; where the public services on which we all rely are adequately supported and funded and where the essential contribution of the voluntary sector to all that is good in our communities and civil society is recognised and supported.

As we re-evaluate what is really important in life in a post COVID world perhaps we shall be lucky and discover a 'pot of gold' at the end of the rainbow. That must be our hope alongside our determination to overcome the current crisis and build a better world for the future.

Jo Ash, CBE
SVS Chief Officer

TRUSTEE AND STAFF INFO

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(As of August 2020)

Kevin Liles	Chair
Mike Treasure Jones	Vice Chair
Carole Rogers	Honorary Treasurer
Cllr Tom Bell	(nominated SCC)
Cllr John Noon	(nominated SCC)
Mary Carnegie	
Peter Keeley	
Simon Mantle	
David Wrighton	
Ahmed Sasso, MBE	

SVS LEAD CONTACTS

Jo Ash, CBE	Chief Executive / Company Secretary
Rob Kurn	Deputy Chief Executive
	Healthwatch Southampton
	City Shopmobility
Jude Perrott	Finance & Business Controller
Nicola Judd	SO:Linked Programme Manager

SVS VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT TEAM

Julie Marron	Development Worker
Rocio Cortez Cruz	Volunteer Development Worker
Louise Mackney	Development Worker
Maria Kelly	Development Worker

SVS VISION

"Southampton is a city where everyone is inspired to make positive contributions to their communities."

SVS ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

- Passion – SVS believes voluntary action is built on the passion of people and communities to make a positive difference.
- Inclusiveness – SVS believes that the voluntary ethic is best upheld when organisations promote equality and diversity and are open, democratic, accessible and accountable to their users, members and the wider community.
- Independence – SVS will be a strong and independent voice for the sector, supporting best practice in autonomous organisations.
- Innovation – SVS will support organisational resourcefulness, flexibility and adaptability, through innovative, original ideas and creative solutions
- Partnership – SVS is committed to positive partnership work to create shared thinking and find solutions to meet local needs

THE MISSION STATEMENT

"SVS aims to support a vibrant voluntary and community sector with a strong voice and the best of support. SVS actively promotes voluntary action and the provision of essential services to vulnerable communities."

Southampton Voluntary Services

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