

SSP Conference 22nd November 2011 World Café Discussions



For the World Café session, 24 table hosts came forward with a stuck issue and asked delegates to help them move their issues forward.

We've tried to capture the spirit of the conversations during this session through notes provided by the table hosts.

Table 1: Swindon Carers Centre & Great Western Hospital Stuck issue: 'How can we encourage our volunteers to stay?'

- Clarity – set expectations early on – get good match between role and person
- Recognition – some charities were founded on volunteers – a very different proposal to 'replacing' staff with volunteers
- Variety – some volunteers want to build skills, some want a pastime, some to give something back – organisations need to recognise individual aims
- Service users and ex-service users want to give something back and bring unique perspective
- Potential – for everyone approaching retirement, make sure they are aware of possibilities – for NEETS and long-term unemployed, encourage volunteering
- Value and involve volunteers, never blame them, but many don't want 'recognition'
- Volunteers hate being blamed

Table 4: Swindon Borough Council – Arts & Culture Department
Stuck issue: ‘How can we enable communities to hold events in their local areas? ‘

- How do we define an “event”? What makes an “event” as opposed to a gathering/large party/coffee morning?
This is a really tricky area and prompted loads of discussion, there was a feeling that there needs to be some definitions to help here, maybe based on numbers of people expected to attend and/or on whether it’s a regular activity?
- What should event organisers provide?
- Do we know and value what is already happening in our communities?
- There’s a lack of information, can we use social media better?
- SBC should hand over more responsibility to the community – work with the new Locality Leads to develop and support local knowledge
- Can newly emerging events “piggy back” on other events/activities to help get started? (The Bigsingthing is a great example of where SBC started something and then its been taken on by the community)
- Make more use of local publications
- Relationships and trust/knowing who to go to for help was seen as really important
- Could there be a clear advice and guidance service – a single point of contact/one stop shop for organisers?
- Very difficult because of the vast array of different events, advice for one type of event not necessarily valid for another
- The biggest challenge facing the community was the “red tape monster” – insurance, policing, H&S etc.
This prompted big discussion about risk, some felt the community should just get on with stuff and ignore the H&S but others were more wary of possible criminal and legal repercussions. A possible solution could SBC hold Public Liability Insurance on all its venues – indoors and outdoors that anyone can use to hold events in those places?
- Could more use be made of schools as venues?
- Can the community take on more ownership/self-policing?

Useful sources of advice

www.mycommunitystrater.co.uk an initiative by Zurich
www.vaengland.org.uk Voluntary Arts England are about to update their website but already include a section on Running an Event

Table 7: Swindon Borough Council - Communities
Stuck issue: ‘What do you need from us to enable you to volunteer?’

Key Points that were made consistently

- Money to cover direct costs i.e. travel expenses and training where that is costly

- SBC to work with bus companies for a volunteer pass
- Need acknowledgement of the cost of managing volunteering in funding
- Need to have a database about who groups are and what they do-what opportunities exist
- Insurance-very costly and there should be a borough wide scheme for voluntary groups
- Facility hire on council premises is too high and goes up too much
- Need an infrastructure organisation-one point of contact

Table 9: Volunteer Centre Swindon

Stuck issue: 'How can we engage with organisations to get more opportunities for volunteering involvement?'

- Volunteer Centre Swindon needs to ensure that our core services to promote volunteering are funded by Swindon Borough Council post March 12. We are the central place for volunteering and could be undertaking far greater delivery/promotion if we are properly resourced to do this work. Our current contracting arrangements are due to end on March 31st 2012.
- It is also clear from the conversations that SBC does not have an adopted policy or strategy on volunteering. We undertook this piece of work with Caroline Cooper (SBC)several years ago. It was never followed up and adopted. I know there are mixed messages and experiences of volunteering within the Council

Table 10: Voluntary Action Swindon

Stuck issue: 'How can VAS continue to campaign and support the VCS with zero funding?'

- Table discussions around this issue were very interesting, and there was a great deal of brainstorming to try to solve the problem. We didn't come up with anything radical that could solve VAS's funding problem but it helped to firm up my ideas and hopefully helped gain some support for our cause.

Table 11: Swindon Youth Partnership

Stuck issue: 'How can we unlock youth potential around volunteering?'

- The conversation was generally very constructive.
- Even though there were 3 different groups of participants with their own energy, the conversation was becoming a little laboured by the last 10 minutes or so. However it was good to have a wide range of people focussing on one topic and they came up with some good ideas.



**Table 12: Swindon Borough Council - Planning
Stuck Issue: 'How can we encourage communities to have their say around the development of local plans and planning applications in their areas?'**

- I felt overall the table discussions went well and the results were very positive.
- I received some good ideas on engaging in the future including using social networking websites and through improving the planning pages on the SBC website.
- As a result of the meetings we have started to update the SBC website (it should be finished after xmas) and we are looking at using Facebook and Twitter in future consultation.

**Table 13: Swindon Borough Council – Childrens Services
Stuck issue: 'How can we make young people aware of the effects of drinking and encourage them to stay safe?'**

The overarching feeling from our group discussions which included lots of young people were:

- Have had sessions at school about the use of alcohol. Not really useful. No one really listens to young people, any message needs not to be from the police – we don't like each other.
- Needs to be some-one who has 'been there, done that' – someone who 'gets it'. Credible messages from credible messengers.

- Recently seen the Stay Safe display at local shopping centre about drinking and driving – all agreed it was really shocking. Personal experience, shock, personal effect. Someone I believe.
- Sixth Sense Theatre – some students had seen their work and thought it good and they got the messages. Good way to engage young people.
- The police rep described some of the initiatives they were using in the town centre – Blue tooth messages about staying safe, using cabs, dangers of robberies when leaving night clubs etc. Young people said they were more likely to be drinking in houses, parks, shop doorways.
- They can easily get drink, either their selves or some else will buy it for them. Girls find it easier, can look much older than they actually are.
- Girls more likely to drink, boys to use weed. Similar price, both easy to get. Effects of cannabis better than alcohol – just makes you relaxed, drinking can make you unsafe. ‘I am safe using weed, I’m not safe if I drink too much’.
- Concern amongst group about increasing difficulty in engaging with schools as they become academies.
- YP need the information, even if they don’t use it straight away. Need to be respected to make the right decisions.
- Parents need to be targeted, responsible parenting. Families not getting enough support early enough. Interventions often too late.
- YP need to be occupied – sport for example. YP not really wanting to do youth clubs any more, and anyway these sorts of activities not now so widely available. Becoming very risk averse with our children – not allowing them to go out alone.
- Peer pressure huge for YP.

Table 15: Swindon Civic Voice

Stuck issue: ‘How can we help neighbourhoods plan for their future?’

- The overarching issue from these discussions was that: there are many people volunteering in the community at the moment, we don’t need more volunteers as much as we need to feel assured that views expressed by these volunteers are taken seriously by members / officers when policy / decision making.

Table 20: Job Centre Plus

Stuck issue: ‘What needs to happen to ensure that residents and community groups can engage in One Swindon?’

- Use Ambassadors in local communities to help with the One Swindon messages and to encourage involvement with the Locality Managers and in any locality forums – example includes Green Square’s Residents Boards
- Clarity is required concerning the Roles and Responsibilities of those working at a locality level. Particularly the role of the Elected members and that of the Locality Manager.

- Clear messages about “what’s new” in this approach – need to change perceptions and expectations of local people to encourage them to engage.
- Residents must be able to “spot the difference” and know that their views matter.
- Accept that we cannot change things overnight – are there quick wins though? We should do more along the lines of “you told us that so we did” or “you wanted so we helped you to”
- Public recognition of the work of VCS organisations – some perceptions that these organisations are neither “official” or “professional”
- Stop holding general meetings – make engagement events around themes to improve turn-out.
- Tell the good stories to keep the churn of volunteers happening. Eg School Governors in Swindon
- Establish hubs – physical locations in localities where **voluntary** services can deliver – help residents gravitate to the centre of a place .
- Expectations – tell people in advance what their contribution will be – people are often frightened to join or walk in
- Avoid one size fits all – think about the most important and most relevant route to market. i.e. Local Newsletters; Social Media; Existing networks
- We need to better join up of the 3rd Sector – ability to signpost “unwanted volunteers” to other voluntary organisations. The infrastructure for the 3rd sector is crumbling/creaking.
- Borough Structure needs to be more transparent – residents should be able to easily identify key decision makers, key contacts, networks and strategies.
- Manage the bureaucracy – develop a clear, Vol Sector Commissioning Strategy.
- Existing good practice to consider such as Cheltenham Champs in Hester’s Way, Swindon’s 360 Project.

Table 22: NHS Swindon

Stuck issue: ‘How can we encourage public/private/V&C sectors to promote healthy living and healthy choices as part of everyday businesses?’

- Encourage people to Cycle/Walk to work, between meetings and hold walking meetings. Park and Stride or park and cycle provision. Encourage and publicise the workplace bike discount scheme
- Encourage line management training to include brief advice/ brief interventions on lifestyle goals which could be used as part of appraisal etc. (eg how can we (the employer) help you achieve your lifestyle goals).
- Encourage singing in the workplace – lunchtimes, first thing in the morning etc.
- Encourage the use of stress survey’s and follow up on findings
- Encourage healthy eating – healthy vending machines – water only, discourage biscuits at meetings, ideas for healthy lunch boxes; vegetable boxes sent to work
- Offer lifestyle support groups in the work place at lunchtimes or straight after work– stop smoking, weight watchers, mindfulness courses or groups etc.

Table 23: Inner Flame

Stuck issue: 'How can we all create employment and training opportunities for young people?'

- Let people know that's going on
- Realistic careers advice from age 13
- Don't judge and stereotype unemployed young people - treat them as individuals
- Encourage other learning opportunities outside colleges / universities
- Value of experience – more work experience opportunities
- Help young people with their mindset – motivation
- Identify youth volunteering opportunities – more!
- Job creation – bring back Future Jobs Fund

