

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee: 8th July, 2015

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS) Annual Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Committee with information of the work of VCVS throughout the year April 2014-March 2015

Recommendation

That the Committee receive the report for information

Reason for the Recommendation

As required by the terms of the VOGC/VCVS Deed of Grant

Background

2.1 Formed in 1997, VCVS is a member organisation, the infrastructure organisation for voluntary and community organisations based in, or serving, the Vale of Glamorgan. VCVS' membership rose from 474 for 2013/14 to 482 groups this year.

2.2 Our role is to support voluntary action in the Vale of Glamorgan, which we do in a variety of ways. Working to an Annual Work Programme based on the Welsh Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Partnership Agreement Minimum Standards, we aim to encourage and inspire standards of excellence through our support and development, representation and joint working.

2.3 Whether representing the view of members nationally, or printing posters for a local group, we work to build the capacity of the voluntary sector in the Vale of Glamorgan and raise awareness about the work it does to the benefit of the community as a whole.

2.4 VCVS is managed by a Board of Trustees nominated and elected by its membership. During 2014/15 VCVS had a paid staff of 14 – 7 core staff and 7 project staff. As an organisation dedicated to delivering the highest possible quality of service to our stakeholders, in 2001 VCVS adopted the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Voluntary Organisations (PQASSO) created by the Charities Evaluation Service. PQASSO is also the Welsh Government's preferred quality assurance system for Third Sector Organisations.

2.5 There are nineteen County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) throughout Wales all providing services to their local voluntary and community sector as laid down in the Welsh Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Partnership Agreement.

Relevant Issues and Options

Achievements in year

3.1 Merger with Vale Volunteer Bureau

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services continues to work with organisations across the Vale of Glamorgan to encourage closer working practices to ensure efficient and cost effective delivery of services.

3.1.1 During 2014/15, as a final development of the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Vale Volunteer Bureau and VCVS, the Joint Working Group, established by Trustees of both organisations moved further towards developing a new organisation, Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), into which would merge both VCVS and the Vale Volunteer Bureau. Members and stakeholders of both VCVS and the Vale Volunteer Bureau were consulted during the period of this report. Funders were informed by formal notification. Glamorgan Voluntary Services was formally established in October 2014. The members of the Joint Working Group became the first Trustees of the new organisation. Glamorgan Voluntary Services is now a Company Limited by Guarantee and a registered charity. Extensive work was undertaken regarding the structure of the new organisation, which was agreed in February 2015. Assets from both VCVS and the Vale Volunteer Bureau are being transferred into the new organisation which will continue to deliver the services previously delivered by VCVS and the Vale Volunteer Bureau.

3.2 IT

3.2.1 Website

The VCVS website continued to be a major asset with the number of visits continuing the upward trend of previous years. The website session visits rose to a remarkable 35,683 compared to the previous year of 24,633 representing an increase of 45%. With the merger almost complete, a new website reflecting the work of Glamorgan Voluntary Services is being constructed integrating and will be launched during 2015/16.

3.2.2 Social Media

VCVS has made a commitment to ensure that Third Sector organisations operating in the Vale of Glamorgan have the opportunities to gain and build on their skills to make full use of 21st century communication mechanisms. A very comprehensive programme of training courses has been developed for groups and organisations operating in the Vale of Glamorgan.

3.3. Development and Advice Services

3.3.1 Our offices in Barry are open to members and potential members for advice and development work. We offer information and guidance to assist organisations to operate legally and efficiently e.g. by providing information on registering as a charity, how to put together a governing document and how to develop policies and procedures.

3.3.2 VCVS has continued to provide Third Sector organisations with a range of support to develop ideas and projects. Support has been offered in a variety of ways including face to face meetings, e-mail, telephone consultations and briefing sessions. Our range of Information Sheets continue to be popular and these have been invaluable in helping us deal with the more general day to day enquiries. More and more of our information is available on line via our website, enabling our members to access appropriate development information and advice more effectively and at a time that suits them.

3.4 Information Service

3.4.1 We act as an information agency for and about our members, maintaining a comprehensive database and producing a directory of our members to publicise their services; its availability is advertised regularly. We have produced information leaflets on our services in Welsh. Our information service was accessed 1567 times with members receiving additional information via e-bulletins on a weekly basis.

3.4.2 "Vista", the VCVS quarterly magazine, is published in house four times a year and is distributed to 721 groups and individuals. "Vista" is available in CD format and sent to three groups whose members have a visual impairment. "Vista" is supplemented by regular updates of newsletters on Health, Social Care and Well Being and Sustainable Funding News. Over the past year, 8 updates were produced.

3.4.3 Our comprehensive range of information sheets are available in both English and Welsh for voluntary organisations to access either by hard copy, e-mail or through our website. This service is free to voluntary organisations and continues to be a resounding success.

3.5 Practical Services

3.5.1 These are a real benefit to many small voluntary organisations with little or no spare income. Low cost, reliable printing, help with desktop publishing, the local of display equipment for exhibitions and presentations – these are some of the services that VCVS offers its member groups.

3.5.2 Our reprographic services were used 148 times this year (last year it was 188 times), with 100% evaluating them as "excellent". With the help of booklet making, laminating, collating and folding machines, the use of our meeting room and equipment, a professional effect can be achieved by any of our member groups.

3.6 Networks and Fora

3.6.1 Our Networks and Fora continue to be a popular way for voluntary and community organisations to access and share information. Networks and Fora supported by VCVS were:-

3.6.2 Vale Trustee Network

The Network provides the opportunity to access free, up to the minute professional expertise on issues critical to good governance and management. The Network is the only local forum dedicated to responding specifically to the requirements Trustees encounter in undertaking their governance roles and responsibilities. In the past 12 months, the Network has received presentations covering changes to Charity Law and Charity Accounting.

3.6.3 Vale Housing and Homelessness Forum

This Forum is the longest established of all our Networks and Fora. It has been operating ever since VCVS came into existence. Its works to terms of reference and is made up of agencies (Third Sector and statutory) that have an interest in housing, homelessness and related problems and issues.

3.6.4 The Forum also links in with other strategic partnerships, networks and fora, e.g. Safer Vale Partnership, Health Social Care and Well Being Network and the Domestic Abuse Forum.

3.6.5 Vale Voluntary Action and Community Development Network

The Network meets quarterly in locations across the Vale of Glamorgan. A variety of informative and interesting presentations were arranged with both VCVS and the Vale Volunteer Bureau providing useful input at each meeting. The network is open to any organisation with an interest in volunteering or voluntary action.

3.7 Funding Service

3.7.1 VCVS' funding and information service provided support to 64 groups throughout the year with a reported £56,335 of funding obtained as a direct result of the advice and information given by VCVS. This amount continues to reduce as a result of the growing competition for diminishing streams of funding available to Third Sector organisations.

3.7.2 Four editions of the Sustainable Funding Newsletter were produced containing information on a range of funders along with other useful articles to assist groups in their search for vital funds. Updates are posted two or three times a week on the funding section of the website and regular weekly e-bulletins are sent to over 350 groups.

3.7.3 Seven Funding Surgeries were held with representatives from a range of major funders including the Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund giving valuable advice on a 1-2-1 basis with Third Sector organisations. 48 groups attended these sessions.

3.7.4 Funding is still a major issue for many groups as the economic situation becomes harsher for those groups that receive most of their funding from statutory bodies e.g. local authorities. More groups are seeking funding from other sources, e.g. Trusts and Foundations and this is creating a more competitive environment.

3.8 Training Service

3.8.1 During the year, 26 group training events were scheduled, all aimed at building the capacity of local organisations. Training opportunities offered included:-

Introduction to Social Media
Minute Taking
Basic First Aid
POVA Level 1
Being a Trustee
Making Every Contact Count
Tackling Twitter
First Aid – Appointed Person
Internet Fundraising
Negotiating and Influencing Meetings

3.8.2 A total of 132 delegates attended the training courses with 100% rating the training as either good or excellent.

3.8.3. VCVS has continued with its IT 1-2-1 training courses. VCVS held 5 training sessions with all attendees rating the courses as good or excellent.

3.9 Partnership, Consultation and Joint Working

3.9.1. The Third Sector is seen as an important partner in supporting the work of statutory bodies in a wide range of areas, and VCVS is committed to working in partnership to develop and improve local services.

3.9.2 VCVS continues to facilitate Third Sector Representation in formal joint planning in accordance with the agreed Protocol between the Local Authority and the Third Sector, via the Health, Social Care and Well Being Network, or via the full VCVS membership where appropriate.

3.9.3 VCVS has continued to represent the sector on the Local Service Board, other strategic partnership and appropriate sub-groups, ensuring the voice of the sector and the wider community is heard at all levels. In addition, with the Reshaping of Services agenda, VCVS has been heavily involved in consultations and discussions with service providers regarding the participation of the Third Sector in the shaping and delivery of future services. For example, the Vale of Glamorgan Council is seeking to move some of the library services into the community sector. VCVS and other Third Sector organisations have been working with the local authority to ensure that people and communities are engaged every step of the way.

3.9.4 Some of the key Strategic Partnerships on which VCVS plays a key role include:-

Vale Local Service Board
Vale Local Service Board Implementation Group
Children and Young People's Partnership
Families First/Flying Start Strategic Executive Group
Cardiff and Vale Integrated Health & Social Care Programme Board
Vale Public Health & Wellbeing Board
Creative Rural Communities
Safer Vale Partnership
Vale Learning and Skills Partnership
Equalities Consultative Forum
Vale Environmental, Economic and Regeneration Partnership
Barry Regeneration Area Board
Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee
Barry Communities First Cluster Partnership

3.9.5 Joint Working Groups

Ageing Well Group
Area Adult Protection Committee
Barry Market Stall Steering Group
Cardiff and Vale Area Planning Board
Cardiff and Vale Communication Hub KPI Group
Cardiff & Vale Public Health Employees Network
Cardiff and Vale UHB Stakeholder Reference Group
Cardiff and Vale UHB Third Sector Steering Group
Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee
CAVAMH Mental Health Forum
Care and Repair Strategic Business Planning Committee
Carers Measure Working Group
Carers Strategy and Planning Group
Carers Support and Information Network Group (CSING)
Change Plan – Change Co-ordination Group
CYP Emotional & Mental Health Improvement Group
Creative Rural Communities – Greenlinks Steering Group
Creative Rural Communities Local Action Group
Dementia Supportive Communities
Developing Information & Support Centres in UHB
Developing Volunteering in the UHB
Domestic Abuse Forum
Domestic Abuse Forum – Strategic Management Group
Food and Physical Activity group
Health, Social Care and Well Being Business Planning Group
Learning & Skills Adult & Community Learning Management Group
Local Service Board Asset Management Group
Local Service Board Customer Contact Group
Local Service Board Shared Training Opportunities Group
Local Service Board Finance Group

Safer Vale Commissioning and Co-ordination Group
Safer Vale Substance Misuse Advisory Team
Social Care Workforce Development Partnership
South East Health and Social Care Facilitators group
Sport Lot Community Chest
Tobacco Free Cardiff and Vale
UHB Public Health Steering Group
UHB Volunteer Stakeholder Group
Vale Locality Engagement Group
Vale Public Health & Wellbeing Board
VOGC Providers Forum
Vale 50+ Forum
Workforce Strategy Group
Cardiff and Vale Learning Disability Planning Group
Workforce Development Sub Group Meeting
Wyn Steering Group

National networks
BIG Child's Play Regional Advisory Group
Institute of Fundraising Cymru
Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils
Wales Council for Voluntary Action Assembly Liaison Group
Wales Council for Voluntary Action Equality and Human Rights Coalition
Wales Council for Voluntary Action Health and Social Care network
Wales Funders Forum

3.10 Health, Social Care and Well Being

3.10.1 The Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Network

This network provides an opportunity to bring together all voluntary organisations operating in the Vale of Glamorgan who have an interest in health and social care. It facilitates a strong, collective voice, supports the involvement of voluntary organisations in planning, development and delivery of health and social care services, influences health and social care policy to bring about change and improve services and facilitates communication between the voluntary and statutory and other sectors. The Network has increased in numbers over the year and currently has over 270 members.

3.10.2 Four Network meetings were held during the year which received a variety of presentations from various agencies. Over 80 people attended the Network Meetings during 2014-15.

3.10.3 The Network e-bulletins, due to popular demand, are now sent weekly rather than monthly. The e-bulletins include updates on health and social care services in the Vale of Glamorgan, updates from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, the Vale of Glamorgan Council, from Third Sector organisations and general wellbeing information.

3.10.4 The main achievements of our Health, Social Care and Well Being work during 2014/15 are:-

- Developed service specification for Third Sector Broker role for Contact1V and worked with Vale Council to implement under Intermediate Care Funding. Funding awarded to third sector organisation and Broker appointed. Their role is to pull together a range of third sector services for older people, taking referrals from health and social care staff.
- Delivered three Making Every Contact Count sessions to third sector organisations with over 20 people attending.
- Directory of services for older people produced in response to requests from Vale CRS, health and social care staff. GVS continues to update the online version of this and the Directory of Services for Carers.
- GVS organised meeting between Vale Locality Manager and third sector organisations in receipt of Vale Council funding to facilitate communication and planning. Further meetings planned.
- A series of meetings have been held with the third sector to discuss the Reshaping Services Strategy.
- Worked with the UHB's Patient Experience Team to develop the Information Centre in Llandough and co-ordinated third sector input. A range of third sector organisations now attend on a regular basis.
- Case study of Vale People First produced including how they embed co-production into their organisation, and circulated to health and social care staff.
- Facilitate Carers Support and Information Network Group (CSING) which is attended by health, social care and third sector staff and provides an opportunity to share information about carers' services.
- Worked with Barry GP Cluster. Third sector champions identified in each surgery and developing links with third sector organisations, e.g. Gingerbread is doing drop in sessions.
- Starter Guide to Equality Engagement with the Third Sector (guidelines for Clinical Boards) produced collaboratively by UHB, GVS and C3SC. This is a practical guide to engagement, providing advice on how to engage with third sector organisations who support people with equality protected characteristics.
- Keeping in Touch with the Third Sector event held in UHL in December 2014. Event attracted over 40 health and social care staff and helped to develop greater links with third sector organisations.
- Worked with VOGC to ensure third sector input into Intermediate Care Fund proposals and developed assessment process for assessing third sector proposals, set up panel of assessors and has made recommendations to Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- Two GVS staff attended Dementia Friendly Champions training and are now able to offer Dementia Friends training to wider third sector.
- Agreement reached with UHB and Vinci Park for third sector volunteer drivers to be exempt from parking charges in UHW. Guidance drawn up and promoted to third sector. GVS co-ordinating initial registration.
- Member of two Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC) task and finish groups looking at the review of Supporting People Services. One group is

developing the Regional Commissioning Plan and the other is looking at older people's services.

3.11 VCVS' Environmental Impact

3.11.1 VCVS is committed to the welfare of the environment and endeavours to have a positive environmental impact. VCVS recycles its printer cartridges, paper, tins, bottles, cardboard, plastics and most office equipment. VCVS strives to send more and more information by e-mail and is now sending its membership approval packs by e-mail and using electronic questionnaires and evaluation forms instead of hard copies.

3.12 Efficiency Savings

3.12.1 VCVS is committed and determined to make the best use of funders' money so has made efficiency savings in a number of areas. VCVS constantly aims to become more efficient in every area of its work. Some of the saving initiatives include: encouraging over 320 contacts to receive VCVS' Vista magazine and supplements by e-mail; introducing an e-bulletin service; restricting telephone calls made to mobile phones; turning off electrical items when not in use; using a smaller VCVS room for our training courses rather than paying for room hire and encouraging our staff to only print if required. This, together with constant vigilance and hard negotiation, continues to ensure that VCVS is getting the best possible deals on contracts and services.

3.13 Projects

3.13.1 Two cross region (Cardiff & Vale) consortium projects that VCVS is involved with continue to work extremely well.

3.13.2 Friendly AdvantAGE

VCVS is the fund holder and consortium manager for Friendly AdvantAGE and the project has gone from strength to strength in year 3.

3.13.3 Friendly AdvantAGE project strands continue to deliver 1-2-1 befriending, group activities and IT skills activities across Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan

Year 3

230 referrals received (total referrals 657)

50 beneficiaries currently receiving 1-2-1 support

376 beneficiaries attending group activities and trips

38 new beneficiaries signed up for IT support

45 beneficiaries awaiting a volunteer

100 beneficiaries completed (total completed 157)

3.13.4 Let's Get Out (LGO) Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan

Between September 2013-August 2014 the LGO Co-ordinators worked an extra 6 hours per week to deliver 1-2-1 befriending to beneficiaries who have more complex needs and are more difficult to place with a volunteer. This was successful and enabled the project to exceed the number of beneficiaries reached (total 279).

3.13.5 Rural Connections

The Co-ordinator continues to develop community activities. Weekly sessions take place in Bonvilston, Ewenny, Llantwit Major, Ogmere and St Athan, offering a range of activities: mah jong, quizzes, coffee mornings and a luncheon club. The co-ordinator has also organised time limited activities: Zumba Gold, Extend. Tai Chi and Otago activities. Day trips have been attended by 152 beneficiaries. The co-ordinator organised a Fit, Fun over 50 event attended by 83 beneficiaries

3.13.6 Getting On With IT

The Co-ordinator has continued to develop relationships with residents in Care Homes and Sheltered Accommodations. Coffee mornings are held to encourage residents to join the project. GOWIT has received a small donation from Waitrose, Cowbridge which is yet to be spent.

3.13.7 Scope

The project co-ordinator has set up a photography project at Sully Skills Centre for the use of beneficiaries and this will continue over the next year. The gardening project continues.

3.13.8 Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern

The Co-ordinator continues to recruit beneficiaries to the project. The Co-ordinator is also involved in the Dinas Powys Monday club attended regularly by 20 people.

3.13.9 Co-Creating Healthy Change

VCVS, in partnership with Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC) - who is the fund holder and consortium lead - together with a group of other organisations, submitted a successful consortium bid for a consortium project covering both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The project is working well and VCVS are ensuring that there is provision for the Vale of Glamorgan.

3.15.10 Barry: A New Community

This Heritage Lottery funded project commenced in July 2013 and ended in April 2015. VCVS commissioned a consultant to independently evaluate the project. A draft copy of the evaluation is attached as **APPENDIX 1**

3.15.11 Consortium Development

This project commenced in October 2014 thanks to a grant from the Vale of Glamorgan's Voluntary Action Scheme. The project aims to bring together Third Sector Organisations to work in consortia to develop joint funding bids and also be in a robust position to jointly tender for contracts.

3.15.12 The Consortium Development Officer (CDO) commenced work on 2nd October 2014 and spent some time at the start familiarising myself with the organisation, partners and stakeholders and attending appropriate Network Meetings

including Cardiff and Vale Carers Support and Information Network group, Vale Voluntary Action and community Development Network and the Vale Health & Social care and Well Being Network. Work has started on 3 consortia, the biggest of which is a People & Places bid to the Big Lottery for £940,000. The partners are Parkinson's UK, the Stroke Association, British Red Cross, Scope, Cardiff & Vale Parents Federation and Vale People First. Initial research has commenced into a Youth Project and have met with one possible partner. Meetings with other potential partners are in progress. A Heritage Lottery Bid, looking at the use of ibeacon technology to promote the Heritage of areas of the Vale is now in its early stages of development.

3.15.12 Communities 2.0

The "Get the Vale Online" project, funded by Communities 2.0 aimed to increase digital inclusion across the Vale of Glamorgan. This project ended in March 2015 and the final report is attached as **APPENDIX 2**

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

Legal Implications (to include Human Rights Implications)

4. Whilst there are no direct legal implications arising from this report, maintaining good relations with the successor body to VCVS will benefit the community in terms of improvement to human rights.

Crime and Disorder Implications

5. VCVS' work with voluntary and community groups throughout the Vale of Glamorgan should assist in increasing social inclusion and reducing crime.

Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language Issues)

6. Equal, the Council's position on equality of opportunity is put into daily practice through the funding of VCVS's work with the voluntary and community groups operating in the Vale of Glamorgan

Corporate/Service Objectives

7. Partnership working is a Core Value within the Council's Corporate Plan Policy Framework.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

8. n/a

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

9. All Scrutiny Committees

Background Papers

Contact Officer

Rachel Connor, Chief Executive, Glamorgan Voluntary Services

Officers Consulted

n/a

Responsible Officer

Rachel Connor, Chief Executive, Glamorgan Voluntary Services

Barry a New Community -

A project funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund

Evaluation Report

May 2015

**Undertaken by Richard Newton of Richard Newton Consulting on behalf
of VCVS**

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Overview

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services applied for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund in February 2013 to support the project 'Barry : A New Community'.

The project was initially due to run from May 2013 through to November 2014, although this was extended (with the permission of the Heritage Lottery Fund to April 2015).

The project was funded under the 'Your Heritage' funding strand of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project sought to examine the period 1891 – 1945 in Barry, creating a time trail, utilising census data, memories, pictures and family history. The time trail was to tell the story of the population expansion in Barry at that time (from 75 people in 1881 through to 40,000 in 1913).

In particular the project sought to tell the story of this population expansion, and the unique migrant community which formed and became part of the Welsh diaspora. The project sought to explore the heritage of the people who have influenced modern day Barry. This includes their backgrounds, their skills and occupation

The project sought to generate a number of legacy benefits –

1. A permanent exhibition on display at the Butetown History and Arts Centre (Cardiff), with an associated travelling exhibition to be shown across Wales
2. Audio-recordings of people's memories stored with the National Museum of Wales
3. Family trees of Barry Families and the interlacing of people who settles
4. Young people trained to undertake heritage research
5. Providing people with a strong understanding of the creation of Barry and its relevance to Wales
6. Explaining Barry's unique mixed race identity

These are taken from the initial application form.

Methodology of this Evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned at the end of the project (April 2015). As such the evaluation framework was established post project delivery as opposed to running in parallel throughout project delivery. As such any recommendations made in the evaluation have not been able to impact on project delivery.

The evaluation applied a number of techniques including –

- Review of initial funding application and testing of logic models used
- Deskbased reviews of project reviews and records and project outputs
- Remote questionnaires circulated to project volunteers
- Structured conversations with teaching staff
- Structured conversations with project staff

The evaluation has sought to –

- Develop the themes contained within the project management reports
- Confirm the project legacy
- Highlight project learning
- Link project outcomes to those of the Heritage Lottery Fund – Your Heritage Programme
- Identify how the project has developed the capacity of VCVS to support the delivery of heritage projects

The Project: Barry a New Community

The project was supported under the 'Our Heritage' programme, a funding stream of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Our Heritage seeks to fund projects that make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities in the UK.

Projects supported under Our Heritage are expected to achieve a range of outcomes -

Outcomes for Heritage –

With HLF support heritage will be –

- better managed
- in better condition
- better interpreted and explained
- identified / recorded

Outcomes for People

With HLF support, people will have –

- developed skills
- learnt about heritage
- changed their attitudes and/or behaviour
- had an enjoyable experience
- volunteered time

Outcomes for Communities

With HLF support

- negative environmental impacts will be reduced
- more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage
- your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit
- your local economy will be boosted
- your organisation will be more resilient

Project Sponsor

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS) is the lead body responsible for the development and delivery of the project. VCVS were supported by a number of parties in the development of the project. These included –

- Dr Beth Thomas – National Museum of Wales
- Don John – author of ‘A Black History of Southampton’
- Representative of Vale of Glamorgan Library staff
- Local Councillor
- Glamorgan Family History Society

VCVS is an infrastructure organisation, established to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities in the Vale of Glamorgan by supporting voluntary groups. Much of the work undertaken by VCVS is directed at supporting other groups rather than developing individuals. As such this project was unusual within the portfolio of projects managed by VCVS.

Discussions with VCVS highlight that they were interested in developing the project as there was an identified need (by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and VCVS) to develop heritage projects in the Vale of Glamorgan. This is particularly true given lack of a museum in the area and a commitment from the Local Authority to explore the feasibility of a museum. As an organisation that seeks to develop the capacity of other voluntary organisations to support the community VCVS also sought to increase their understanding of heritage projects, and to highlight how members of VCVS may be able to use heritage projects to fulfil their operational objects.

As such it is worth noting that VCVS is not a heritage organisation, nor does it have a track record of delivering heritage projects. Whilst VCVS were supported in development of the project by the parties who had heritage knowledge, this was given in a voluntary capacity. Numbers in terms of participants was developed in good faith and without a history of previous delivery to draw on.

It is worth noting that at the time of writing (May 2015) VCVS have merged with Vale Volunteer Bureau (with whom they had a long-standing working relationship including involvement on this project), and will shortly be known as Glamorgan Voluntary Services.

VCVS employed a project co-ordinator on a part time basis to deliver the activities outlined in the application.

Summary of Project Activities

The project sought to focus on the Thomson Street area of Barry, and to create a record of the residents, their place of birth and occupations. The purpose of this was to plot the development of the community, discovering who came to Barry during the boom period (1890-1910), where they came from and the roles that they undertook. Many of the streets to be included in this work have been lost through urban regeneration activities, making way for modern houses and retail provision.

The project had 3 phases

Stage One - Mapping

It was proposed to use the Census 1891 – 1911, electoral role, first telephone books and other information to determine this information.

This was to be a deskbased phase of the project and would inform future project delivery, creating a database of names, places of residence, places of birth and occupations of residents. This was intended to be a unique record with the information relating to birthplace / occupation distinguishing this from the family ancestor information more widely available.

Linking with The People's Collection this was to form the basis of a people and pictures map of the central docks area of Barry.

Volunteers would be supported with a training day in digitisation, provided by the People's Collection Wales.

Stage Two

The developed database was to inform a number of volunteers (a significant proportion to be drawn from education organisations) to develop the learning and finding still further. Following training in oral history the volunteers would work with community residents to draw out their memories (often second generation) of Barry at the time being surveyed and recorded. This was to include the collation of audio material, along with photographic records. This was intended to make the data collated in stage one to come alive.

Stage Three

Two identical exhibitions were to be created. One was to be displayed on a permanent basis at Butetown History and Arts Centre, whilst the other was to operate on a peripatetic basis across Wales and the UK.

The exhibition would consist of a PowerPoint display mirroring the time trail, database and containing extracts of the materials sourced in stage 2, along with a number of interpretation boards.

Throughout the project lifetime the project was to be supported by a range of marketing activities (including utilisation of Facebook), along with generating a profile at a series of events

Project Achievements

The project shows clear evidence of collation of data relating to 24 streets around Thompson Street. Many of these streets no longer exist due to urban redevelopment.

A suite of data sets have been established based on the 1891 Census, 1901 Census, 1911 Census and the 1897 Business Directory. This equates to 11560 records. The data sets from the Census results highlight the birthplace, occupation, surname and date of birth for residents. The data set from the Business Directory does not contain information in relation to the birthplace of the residents (as this would not be available in such a publication).

As would be expected with a project that maps the expansion of a community, the data sets grow in size with the data sets related to the 1911 census containing the largest amount of data.

Interrogation of the data shows that the logic on which the Barry A New Community is based is correct. The data sets show a wide variation of occupations including Baptist Minister, Silversmith, Ballast Trimmer, Blacksmith, Boilermaker, Charwoman, Coal tipper, Cola Trimmer, Cook Labourer, Donkeyman, Errand Boy, Haulier, Mason, Seaman and Telephone Boy.

Equally the data sets show that the residents of these streets were migrants, with a wide reach of places of birth. The earlier (1891 Census) shows that most of the community members were migrants from other parts of the UK with locations such as Becknock, Caernarvon, Herefordshire, Cardiganshire, Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol listed. The 1911 Census contains a far more internationally diverse population with birthplaces including Australia, Japan, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, West Indies and United States of America.

The project originally targeted to engage 100 local volunteers to undertake this work, and the on-going work of the project through the next two stages. This proved to be a challenge for the project with the final report recognising that the project had engaged with 35 core volunteers (there had been contact with additional individuals but this did not manifest itself through to full participation as a volunteer).

There are a number of reasons attributed to the shortfall relation to actual volunteers when compared to those projected in the original application. These include –

- Many potential volunteers who contacted the project with relation to becoming engaged in activity were actually focused on working with one particular element of the project which reflected their personal interests (e.g. their own family heritage) rather than being prepared to commit to sampling an identified number of streets as required through the project methodology.
- The tasks required were detailed and repetitive data entry tasks. Many potential volunteers were put off by this, leaving the project after a low level of engagement.
- Classification of volunteers – the initial bid suggests that a number of volunteers were to be recruited from Bryn Hafren School. Whilst the project developed strong links with the School (explored later) pupils were not able to participate in project activities as volunteers during school time.
- Equally there was further pressure placed on volunteers from unemployed backgrounds in relation to the impact that volunteering may have on their benefits. The project has evidence of one volunteer withdrawing support after being threatened with a benefit review in relation to their status as a carer
- Many volunteers were originally intended to be sourced through Vale Volunteer Bureau with whom VCVS has a co-working arrangement. VVB are primarily funded by the public sector. Over recent years funding requirements have pushed VVB to work those furthest from the labour market. The nature of the tasks offered by this project, requiring lone working, digital and literacy skills means that the tasks required by this project were often ill-matched to clients of Vale Volunteer Bureau.

Despite this there is evidence that 3150 hours of work were invested into the project by the volunteers, collating data in order to develop the necessary data sets. As such the project clearly hit its target in relation to creating the survey of the population growth of this area of Barry. This work was however carried out by a core team of 35 volunteers rather than the originally anticipated 100 volunteers.

Stage 2 of the project as outlined above did encounter difficulties many of which were linked to the reduced numbers of volunteers taking part in the project. This both reduced available capacity of volunteers to undertake this work at phase two, and also resulted in the mapping / sampling exercises at Stage One taking longer than anticipated, and as such limited available time to complete Stage Two.

There were failures in the logic informing the project, which affected its ability to deliver at stage 2. This related to

1. The attractiveness of participation in oral history to volunteers
2. The appropriateness of oral history to capture memories and stories which were over 100 years old – resulting in the needs to capture third party memories rather than working directly with those who were living and working in Barry. However for many of the people listed in the

sampling exercise this could even been a two-stage removed process diluting the effectiveness of this still further.

The project also faced difficulties in terms of securing oral history training. The project initially sought to offer training for up to 36 volunteers in oral history, delivered by Dr Beth Thomas. This proved difficult to secure and did not take place until May 21st 2015 when volunteers took part in the training. This was in effect after the end of the project so while longer term the volunteers benefitted from the training it had limited impact on the project. Had this been able to be secured earlier in the project lifecycle it would have been more likely to have had an impact on the project.

It is understood that this difficulties in securing oral history training was linked to the availability of approved suppliers as defined by the Heritage Lottery Fund and if this is the case the availability of this training may need assessment to ensure successful delivery of similar projects.

Some activities did take place at Stage 2 however and there is evidence of interviews with older people at care homes and luncheon clubs. The Barry a New Community Facebook page shows evidence of 38 digital stories having been created, many through the committed work of one volunteer. These digital stories have also been uploaded to The People's Collection – and a number have been made available to accompany the education resource (see below).

A group of 30 students from the University of South Wales also created an on-line newsletter utilising video stories / filmed interviews and linking these back to a wordpress site as part of their journalism degree.

Equally 450 students from Bryn Hafren School benefitted from a series of workshops focused on Years 10 and 11, along with Sixth Form pupils. The students did not complete individual evaluations, but structured conversations with teaching staff as part of this evaluation highlights that these were well received by students, and activities not only created an awareness of local heritage, it also helped to challenge the negative perceptions that many of young people had about Barry.

Pupils from the school also took part in cross generational work, linking with the residents of a local residential home. This developed cross generation respect – and teachers reported that many of the students had not had experience of engaging with people of such an age before; with residents being significantly older than the family members that the young people had contact with.

The project can also evidence having attended a number of events ranging from Glamorgan Family History Day through to the National Eisteddfod. No participant evaluations were available for these events, however these will inevitably have created visibility for the project and local heritage.

The project was featured on VCVS website (in an 'about us' capacity), with a more interactive element on Facebook. The page evidences 318 likes, with activity on-going since August 2013. The page hosts pictures offered to the project for archive by local residents, along with all of the digital narratives developed by the project.

The final stage of the project saw the development of the exhibition elements for the project. The scope that this took changed over the duration of the project. An exhibition was still created to be a permanent installation at The Butetown Heritage Centre. At the time of writing this had just been produced and as such the impact of this cannot easily be incorporated into this evaluation.

The initial project sought to develop two identical exhibitions, one to remain at the Butetown Heritage Centre, and the other to be peripatetic in its approach, able to be staged at locations across the country. The decision was taken to replace the second exhibition with a suite of resources circulated to each school in the Vale of Glamorgan. This contains copies of the developed data-sets in stage one along with copies of a number digital stories.

This feels a more appropriate legacy for the project as –

- It is delivered directly into schools and can be used in classrooms
- It recognises that this is a local piece of heritage work, with limited interest to those in other areas
- It responds to a lack of heritage centres / exhibition space in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Meeting the Project Outcomes

HLF support has enabled this area of *heritage* (as in information linked to the population expansion of Barry 1891- 19-11) *to be better recorded and interpreted*.

The utilisation of a volunteer resource has enabled business directories and census information to be interrogated and re-presented in a way which enables searching by themes including places of birth and occupation. These datasets are now available for public use. This is key to gaining a picture of the community which was constantly changing and expanding throughout this time.

The use of Digital Stories has added value to the datasets, in effect using the real stories of local residents to highlight the information that is available in the data sets, and to highlight how this information can be interpreted on an on-going basis.

These resources have been made freely available on public platforms such as The People's Collection Wales, and the projects own Facebook site, thereby creating a lasting accessible legacy for the project. In addition these resources have been circulated to schools throughout The Vale of Glamorgan. This was an addition to the activities initially planned. Discussions with staff from schools in the Vale of Glamorgan have highlighted how these resources are a welcome addition to those already available and have been embedded into the curriculum quickly. There is evidence of these resources already having been used to support the community element of the Welsh Bacalaureate.

The project was also offered a number of original pictures which have been digitally archived and shared, with the physical pictures returned to owners or achieved in appropriate local collections.

The support from HLF has had an impact on *local people*. The number of volunteers directly involved in the project are lower than anticipated, however there is clear evidence that the project generated over 3150 hours of volunteering, delivered by 35 volunteers.

Surveys with these volunteers highlight that of those responding none of the volunteers declared a previous involvement in heritage activities. 100% of volunteers have stated that they have learnt about the history of Barry. Only a third of volunteers responding however recognise that they have gained new skills. All of the volunteers responding highlighted that they wanted to maintain their engagement with heritage based activities.

Anecdotal evidence from the course leader from the University of South Wales, highlighted how volunteering in the project was a valuable learning experience for the students. It re-enforced the concepts of heritage and birth

roots and how these align to present days situations. The project allowed students to gain both vocational skills, develop local heritage knowledge and re-enforce their wider heritage appreciation.

The work in Bryn Hafren School reached 450 pupils; and anecdotal evidence from teaching staff recognising that this work was valuable in 'developing a sense of pride and respect for the people that had gone before them, delivering a key message that we are shaped by the past.

It is also clear that the project had a wider sphere of influence, reaching older people through cross the inter-generational work, and attending the events developed by the project. This changed people's attitudes, not just to heritage but also towards Barry, and towards the contribution that the older community have made to the community. This is an obvious benefit to the *local community*.

Community benefits however stretch further. A number of the volunteers recruited to the project have identified a desire to maintain involvement in heritage based activities, the local area is improved by a greater appreciation of its physical and demographic heritage.

VCVS, and through its association its members have also benefitted from the project, gaining an understanding of running and developing such projects – and creating visibility of a successful heritage project within this network. It is already evident that enquiries and interest in additional heritage projects re forthcoming as a result of the Barry: A New Community project. These projects would be anticipated to have wider community benefit.

Conclusions

Barry A New Community like many projects faces challenges in delivery which affected elements of its delivery, but not impact on the overall project and final benefits.

The main challenge faced by the project was a lack of volunteers prepared to engage with the project. The original numbers in the application were developed in good faith, with limited knowledge of similar heritage projects.

The project team dealt with this, adjusting the delivery phases of the project to reflect available volunteer resources, and the project delivered against the activities in the original bid.

It is clear that the project offered significant benefits to communities, people and heritage, as outlined in the previous section. The project has also created a profile in relation to heritage projects within the Vale of Glamorgan, and built the experiences of VCVS as an infrastructure organisation to support the development of further heritage projects within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Other than variation in numbers of volunteers (with an associated knock on effect in relation to accessing training) the other key variant in terms of project outputs was the creating of one exhibition, rather than two duplicate exhibitions. The permanent exhibition at Butetown History and Arts Centre remains, whilst the second exhibition has been replaced with a suite of teaching resources based on the datasets and digital narratives, which have been circulated to all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

It is reasonable to assume that this is a positive project development. It concentrates the project within the Vale of Glamorgan, where it has a direct geographical relevance to the young people, and ensures that the data is directly available to be embedded into learning – rather than reliant on exhibition opportunities being incorporated into wider programming matrices.

This approach also responds to the fact that there are significantly limited exhibition and museum opportunities within the Vale of Glamorgan, and as such it can be expected that the reach and longer term impact of this work will be greater through this adopted approach as opposed to the initially planned peripatetic exhibition.

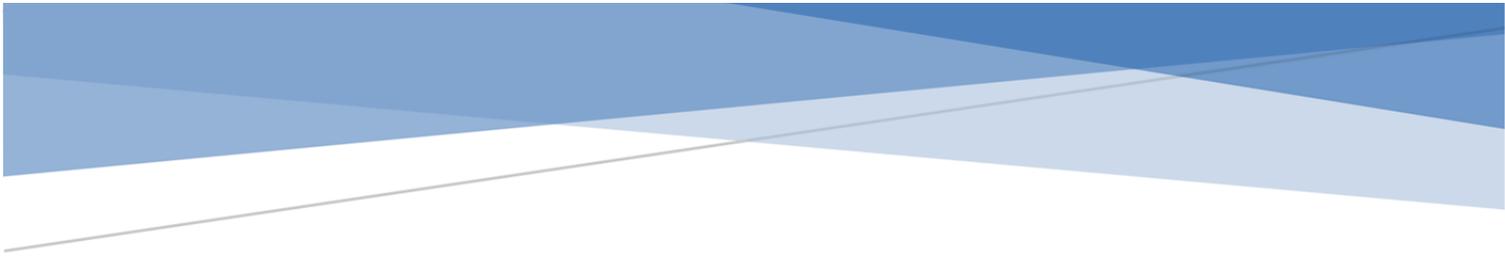
It is fair to conclude that the project met its stated objectives, with some changes in the methods of delivery to address issues that have been identified during project delivery.

In particular the project sought to deliver a number of legacy benefits –

1. A permanent exhibition on display at the Butetown History and Arts Centre (Cardiff), with an associated travelling exhibition to be shown across Wales – The permanent exhibition has been achieved, and

rather than create a duplicate exhibition a suite of teaching resources have been delivered to each school in the Vale of Glamorgan.

2. Audio-recordings of people's memories stored with the National Museum of Wales – these have been stored with The People 's Collection and made available on Facebook
3. Family trees of Barry Families and the interlacing of people who settled in Barry – This has been achieved
4. Young people trained to undertake heritage research – this has been achieved
5. Providing people with a strong understanding of the creation of Barry and its relevance to Wales – This is a long term goal which will be achieved through the on-going use of the materials produced
6. Explaining Barry's unique mixed race identity – achieved through the roll out of the programme.



GET THE VALE ONLINE

FINAL REPORT - 2015

A report into the current situation regarding digital inclusion in the Vale of Glamorgan and impact had by the Communities 2.0 project, Get the Vale Online

Kris Rees & Andreas Karpati

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN

GET THE VALE ONLINE – FINAL REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital inclusion is defined as, "the ability of individuals and groups to access and use information and communication technologies" (Building Digital Communities: A Framework for Action, 2011). In 2015, not being able to use a computer is a significant disadvantage in both economic and social terms. Indeed, a recent report published by the Government placed digital literacy alongside numeracy and English literacy in terms of their importance as an educational foundation. As such, tackling the issue of digital inclusion is now seen as a priority in the UK.

The Internet has been, and continues to be, a great leveller, providing users with access to education, information, as well as the means to save money. Digital literacy is a hugely important skill for both the present and the future. This report will look at digital inclusion within the Vale of Glamorgan and focus on the activity of the Communities 2.0 project, Get the Vale Online.

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION

The benefits of being digitally included are vast and include:

Financial

It is estimated that the average household can save around £560 per year from using price comparison websites (to find the cheapest deals on insurance, utilities and phone tariffs) and paying bills online.

Employment

It is estimated that 70% of jobs now require some degree of IT proficiency – this number will only continue to rise, underlining the importance of digital literacy in the work place. It therefore stands to reason that applicants are more likely to be successful when applying for work if they are digitally literate.

Social

Platforms such as Facebook and Skype make it easy to stay in touch with friends and family, no matter where they are in the world. This can be extremely beneficial for people suffering from feelings of depression and isolation.

Education

Research suggests that children with access to the Internet at home are more likely to succeed than those who do not. In addition, the convenience of Internet-based learning

means that more people have access to education than ever before. From Learn Direct, to the Open University, there are a multitude of courses out there to choose from.

Welfare

Anyone claiming Jobseekers Allowance today will need to prove that they are searching and applying for work online. This means that digital literacy is very much an essential skill for anyone claiming this benefit. With Universal Credit in the process of being rolled out across the country, the importance of digital literacy will increase further over the coming months and years.

2. DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN

The issue of digital inclusion affects every country in the world. For those who are digitally excluded, the divide in terms of opportunity grows every year. The UK government recently published its 'Digital Inclusion Strategy' as well as signing up to the 'UK Digital Inclusion Charter,' which underlines its commitment to tackle this important issue.

Digital inclusion is typically measured by looking at the number of people who regularly use the Internet. A report published in 2013 showed that 73% of adults in Great Britain were digitally included, resulting in a figure of 27% of people remaining digitally excluded.

In Wales, a report published in 2010 stated that digital exclusion was at 34%. In the last major report published (2014) on the subject, this figure had fallen to 21% in Wales. In the same report, figures show that digital exclusion in the Vale of Glamorgan is at 18%, which puts it below the average for Wales, as well as the projected average for the rest of the UK. While this is positive news for the Vale, there is still much work to be done, as roughly one in five adults continue to face the disadvantages associated with digital exclusion.

In many cases, the people who are missing out on the benefits of digital inclusion are those who would stand to benefit most. The Welsh Government has named four categories of people particularly vulnerable to digital exclusion:

- Social housing residents
- People aged 50+
- People living with disabilities
- The unemployed

These four groups have been instrumental in guiding and targeting digital inclusion activities across Wales. Issues faced by these groups primarily include: access to the Internet (geographic), access to IT hardware, learning barriers, lack of available training, a lack of confidence and poor basic literacy.

ACTIVE ORGANISATIONS

There are several organisations currently contributing to digital inclusion outcomes in the Vale of Glamorgan including:

Barry Communities First

In addition to running Job Clubs with computer literacy elements pertinent to the use of Universal Jobmatch, Barry Communities First delivers three dedicated digital inclusion drop-in sessions per week. These run for two hours each and typically support 5-8 beneficiaries per session. All drop-in sessions are held in Communities First areas and aim primarily to support residents of Communities First areas, although to date those from outside of CF postcodes have been able to attend the sessions as well. Barry Communities First has also supported the installation of broadband internet into two community centres previously without internet access, Victoria Park Community Centre and Margaret Alexander Community Centre.

Friendly Advantage 'Get On with IT' Project

The GOWIT project is part of the larger Friendly Advantage project, which supports residents in care homes and sheltered accommodation with digital inclusion sessions run by volunteers. GOWIT works with several housing associations both in Cardiff and the Vale, but does not currently offer digital inclusion activities outside of sheltered housing.

Newydd Housing

Newydd Housing covers digital inclusion in the Vale of Glamorgan through a youth outreach and digital inclusion post. The main digital inclusion activities include a five week long accredited computer course and an affordable laptop scheme supported by the Cardiff and Vale Credit Union. Successful participants of the basic IT course become eligible to rent a refurbished laptop at low cost, and are able to keep the laptop as their personal property after having rented the laptop long enough to cover its cost.

Libraries

Although without a dedicated digital inclusion officer, Vale of Glamorgan Libraries are a key partner and stakeholder in delivering digital inclusion. Libraries remain the primary free-of-charge public access points for internet, and library staff are delivering computer literacy support on an ongoing, needs-based approach. Libraries are also the main hosts of Job Club sessions, which feature a digital inclusion element. With the support of Communities 2.0, a number of libraries have offered dedicated weekly or bi-weekly digital drop in sessions in Barry as well as other library branches in the Vale of Glamorgan. It should be noted that library provision could become compromised in the face of plans to alter 5 rural libraries based in Dinas Powys, Rhoose, St Athan, Sully and Wenvoe.

Vale of Glamorgan Adult Community Learning

Present in Barry, Cowbridge and Penarth, Adult Community Learning (ACL) is able to cover a wide area in the Vale of Glamorgan. With the recent strategic focus on employability related courses, which can be accessed free of charge by those fulfilling relevant criteria, ACL now offer a wide range of basic IT related courses. ACL affiliated tutors are also key in delivering digital inclusion drop-in sessions for Communities First and Vale of Glamorgan Libraries, and are currently providing the bulk of the tutors mobilised through Communities 2.0 funding.

The Job Centre

The role of the Job Centre in the progression of digital inclusion has grown in importance since the changes to claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) were introduced in 2013. Claimants are now required to search, apply and evidence their activity using the gov.uk website – in effect making digital literacy an essential skill for many. For those who are digitally excluded, the Job Centre has an obligation to support their development to the extent that they are able to comply with the Job Centre’s requirements independently. To date this has largely involved promoting the work done by other partners involved in digital inclusion, particularly those that run drop-in sessions and work clubs. There is currently a drive to improve the level of support available in job centres, with the aim of transforming them into ‘digital job centres,’ complete with skilled staff on-hand to provide IT-related assistance.

Vale of Glamorgan Council

The council has played a crucial role in the delivery of digital inclusion, working closely to support all of the aforementioned organisations within the LA. A digital inclusion strategy for the council is currently in development. The strategy will build on work currently underway and enable a collective set of objectives for all services.

3. COMMUNITIES 2.0

Communities 2.0 was a 6-year Welsh Government programme aimed at increasing digital literacy throughout Wales. It was delivered by the Wales Cooperative Centre, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services, Carmarthenshire County Council and the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales. Much of the funding for Communities 2.0 came from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The programme initially worked in the convergence areas of Wales, breaking down barriers to engagement with technologies. Towards its conclusion it began to support initiatives and projects across Wales.

Communities 2.0 has been successful in exceeding its targets and has played an important role in the promotion of digital inclusion throughout Wales. Some of its achievements include:

- Helped more than 50,000 people get online
- Helped nearly 400 community or voluntary groups with IT skills
- Provided free advice and support to 350 social enterprises
- Provided training for around 330 people to progress towards the workplace

4. GET THE VALE ONLINE

A key element of the Communities 2.0 programme was to establish several smaller projects throughout Wales, following the naming convention, 'Get [name of Local Authority] Online.' These smaller projects would then focus on delivering relevant help in that particular area and be supported by the wider Communities 2.0 team.

As the Vale of Glamorgan was not eligible for immediate support, Get the Vale Online began in July 2014 and ran until March 2015. Over the course of the 9 month project, Get the Vale Online has accomplished the following:

- Developed a strategic partnership for digital inclusion
- Established and supported drop-in sessions
- Developed a training manual
- Delivered frontline staff training
- Identified and trained a network of digital champion volunteers
- Established a website

5. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

There are a number of reasons why tackling digital exclusion is in the wider public interest at a local authority level and why digital inclusion therefore deserves a place on their agenda irrespective of Welsh Government targets. The most crucial reason follows on from the reform of national welfare policies and the rollout of Universal Credit in particular. Under the latter, benefit payments will move to a 'digital by default' delivery model. As such, claimants will have to apply for benefits online unless they can cite exceptional reasons for being unable to do so. Even when taking into consideration the current delays in the rollout of Universal Credit, it remains a formidable challenge to make sure that all future benefit claimants possess the necessary computer literacy skills to access Universal Credit online without guidance or supervision. Local Authorities who are likely to bear a significant part of the fallout resulting from under-claimed or withdrawn benefits as a result of a lack of basic computer literacy, are therefore key stakeholders in giving momentum to the digital

inclusion agenda. A closely related issue of concern is the much further advanced introduction of the Universal Jobmatch website as the default platform for jobseekers even in Jobcentres, where the customary touchscreen terminals are being replaced with desktop computers running Universal Jobmatch through Internet Explorer. The transformation of Jobcentres into 'Digital Jobcentres' is in the process of being completed in two Jobcentre branches in the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry and Penarth). As paid employment represents the most effective way to move out of poverty for the majority of the population, there is a wider public interest in providing jobseekers with the necessary computer literacy skills to effectively operate Universal Jobmatch and other online job search platforms.

Another important concern, in addition to the national welfare reform process, is that Local Authorities are increasingly engaging in channel shift strategies in order to achieve savings. As online transactions are up to eight times cheaper than face to face or telephone based customer services, there is a strong interest among Local Authorities to shift customer enquiries and transactions to online. These savings however can be only achieved, not to say justified from a social justice point of view, if the customers most urgently in need of these services are able to confidently access them online. Increasing levels of digital inclusion thus allow Local Authorities to engage in more pronounced digital channel shift strategies, making investment into digital inclusion worthwhile from a financial point of view as well.

Furthermore, digital inclusion can act as a 'force multiplier' for a wide range of other positive social policy outcomes. Customers and beneficiaries who have basic computer and internet literacy are easier to engage with through interactive forms of communication, in a better position to apply self-help approaches by having instant access to relevant information on the internet, as well as statistically better off in terms of personal welfare and wellbeing when compared to those not yet online. As such, digital inclusion measures can contribute to a wide range of other social policy outcomes and should as such be seen as an element of the Tackling Poverty as well as public health agendas.

Given the short timeframe for delivery, it was essential that the project made use of existing strategic links within the Vale of Glamorgan by working in partnership with key stakeholders. A steering group was formed near the beginning of the project and comprised of representatives from the following organisations:

- Vale Centre for Voluntary Services
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Communities 2.0
- Newydd Housing
- Communities First
- Vale Youth Service
- Department of Work and Pensions
- 50+ Strategy Forum

- Vale Library Service

Meetings were typically held every 2-3 months and played an instrumental role in shaping the strategy for the project, including the facilitation of relevant links as well as the avoidance of duplication.

LOOKING AHEAD

Many of the representatives on the steering group have given voice to the hope that the group continues to meet post-project, such has been the usefulness of the network. To have a network of this type set up and meeting on a regular basis will ensure key stakeholders are kept abreast of the latest developments in digital inclusion as well as the activities of their peers. The network will also allow new digital inclusion initiatives to become established far more quickly.

6. DROP-IN SESSIONS

Drop-in sessions provide an informal learning opportunity which is an alternative to more traditional, structured courses. Typically, a drop-in session will run for 2-3 hours in a community venue

Digital drop-in sessions formed a cornerstone of the Communities 2.0 funded digital inclusion initiatives. Drop-ins are characterised by being open, flexible, without a fixed schedule, and most importantly free of charge. They also featured a high support staff to client ratio, ideally offering at least partial one-to-one tuition. In short, they are designed to be joined at any point and engage with each client on an individual basis. As such, drop-ins are particularly suited to engage with:

First time users

Those who are completely new to digital technology often require extensive one-to-one support for mastering their first digital steps. Due to their more personal atmosphere and lack of a fixed curriculum, drop-ins can help to overcome low confidence and fear of technology in a low pressure environment.

Disengaged users

Due to the flexible and more personal nature of drop-in sessions, there is more scope for engaging with individuals and finding out which aspects of the internet they enjoy learning about. This can be particularly important for clients who have been given a mandatory referral by a job centre.

One-off questions

Drop-in sessions can cater for individuals who have specific questions, e.g. about staying safe online, or using specific platforms such as PayPal. They can also offer 'bring your own device' support, where clients can find support in using their own iPads or smartphones.

Digital drop-ins are different to both traditional computer courses and job clubs. Their advantage over computer courses is their already mentioned flexible and open nature, without the requirement to commit to an ongoing course or the pressure to keep pace with a curriculum moving forwards at a fixed speed. When compared to job clubs, digital drop-ins offer a more leisurely and friendly environment without any affiliation to the sometimes negative image clients have of Jobcentres. Both these advantages can also be perceived as disadvantages however, as there are no formal requirements for ongoing learning progress or focused, productive usage of time for a purpose such as job search. Rather than being an alternative to computer courses or job clubs, digital drop-ins are thus better thought of as a stepping stone to them. Once a client has acquired basic computer literacy through attending drop-in sessions, they are better placed to be pursuing either a recognised qualification through a computer course or to focus on job searching by attending job clubs – thereby freeing up space for new digitally excluded clients to attend drop-in sessions. As such, drop-ins should ideally be the first step of a longer progression route towards becoming a more confident user of digital technologies.

Digital drop-ins can, but do not have to be part of Jobcentre Plus Claimant Commitments. While they can help to increase attendance rates, mandatory rather than voluntary referrals can sometimes carry the danger of changing the atmosphere of digital drop-ins.

Drop-in sessions were regularly held at the following locations:

- Barry
- Cowbridge
- Dinas Powys
- Llantwit Major
- Penarth
- Rhoose
- Wenvoe

Over the course of the 9 months, 386 individual beneficiaries received support, which exceeded the target set for the project of 260 (including volunteers and frontline staff).

LOOKING AHEAD

Digital drop-ins have previously been funded through Communities 2.0 as far as tutor costs are concerned. As of April 2015, it is anticipated that Communities First and Newydd Housing will manage and deliver the drop-in sessions previously run by Communities 2.0, while continuing to run their existing sessions.

7. TRAINING MANUAL

Taking inspiration from other 'Get X Online' initiatives, Get the Vale Online created a digital training manual to assist with the delivery of support for the public. These manuals were primarily intended to be a bank of resources for use by staff of organisations working directly with people who are not digitally literate, as well as by drop-in tutors and volunteers. These resources are essentially a set of easily reproducible handouts, which can be distributed to members of the public and act as reference sheets / step-by-step guides on how to use the internet.

Resources are a fantastic teaching tool and play an important role in ensuring an efficient and consistent level of support given by tutors, volunteers and frontline staff. With a comprehensive, yet concise, step by step guide, a beneficiary is able to work without 1-1 support to a far greater degree. With independence in terms of digital use being the ultimate aim, these resources play a fundamental role in improving the efficacy of support.

One of the issues that beneficiaries commonly face is regarding inconsistent guidance. When it comes to using a computer there are often many ways of accomplishing a certain task. If a beneficiary is shown one particular method by a person, and is then shown a different method by someone else the following week, this can be confusing – especially for a beginner. By creating a set of resources that are used 'universally' throughout the Vale of Glamorgan by all of the organisations active in delivering support, it ensures a consistent message, and subsequently a more efficient level of support. These training manuals have been made freely available via the website, with hard copies provided to the following organisations:

- The Library Service
- Communities First
- Newydd Housing
- Barry Job Centre

The resources contained within the manual cover the following topics:

The Basics

This section includes resources covering the desktop, the keyboard, and using the mouse. These handouts are primarily to be used as a reference rather than detailed step-by-step guides.

The Internet

This section is primarily a reference sheet which covers some of the fundamentals of using the internet, such as, using the address bar, identifying hyperlinks, and scrolling.

Email

This is comprised of step-by-step guides for accessing and sending email using both Gmail and Hotmail. It also contains a detailed section on using the online storage facilities offered by both of the aforementioned companies.

Government Gateway

This section covers the entire process of using the Universal Jobmatch website to search and apply for work. It also includes a resource on logging activity – a key requirement for claiming jobseekers allowance.

Useful Information

This section is comprised of a variety of useful resources that don't necessarily fit neatly into any of the other categories. It includes handouts dealing with topics such as, covering letters, a CV guide, an Internet safety guide, and a glossary covering IT-related terminology.

LOOKING AHEAD

A comprehensive version of the manual has been completed and distributed throughout the project's network, especially the library service, which has received multiple copies for use in each branch. As mentioned above, the manual is freely available from the project's website.

The version of the manual that was produced centred on teaching all the skills necessary in order to use the Universal Jobmatch website to the Job Centre's satisfaction, as this was considered to be a priority. However, there is plenty of scope for future development to make the manual more comprehensive. For example, a section on using tablets would be well received.

Given the speed at which the Internet is changing, it is impossible to know how long the guidance contained within the manual will remain valid. Unfortunately this is unavoidable,

but the manual has been designed in such a way as to be easily updatable in the future as and when required.

8. FRONTLINE STAFF TRAINING

As digital exclusion often coincides with other fault lines of social or economic disadvantage, front line staff both in the public and third sectors are likely to be already working with digitally excluded individuals in their established roles, but without necessarily being aware of the digital literacy challenge their clients are facing. This is despite front line staff being ideally placed to be part of initiatives tackling digital exclusion. A lack of self-referral to drop in sessions as well as a general lack of perceived interest in digital technologies are some of the biggest barriers facing efforts to get more people online. Frontline staff who are working with some of these 'hard to reach' groups of digitally excluded individuals are thus in a position to work with / refer some of those who would otherwise be unlikely to receive support to get online.

Get the Vale Online offered dedicated frontline staff training to every employee of the Vale Library Service. The session was initially pitched as a 7 hour training day, but there was a lack of interest primarily owing to the time involved. As such, the training session was re-worked to last 3 hours, which was a more suitable and convenient duration for the library service.

The training session focussed on utilising the training manual to offer a time-effective and consistent level of support. The attendees were required to assume the role of a complete beginner and as a 'class' were led through each section of the manual, thereby gaining experience of how the resources within could be used in practical situations. This would also ensure that any gaps in knowledge would be covered.

Training was given to 55 out of 62 library staff within the Vale and was graded at the highest possible score by 100% of people who completed the evaluation form. 100% also stated that they felt more confident in helping the public than they had prior to undertaking the training.

LOOKING AHEAD

The training sessions were very much considered a success by the library service and it will be interesting to see how the staff fare now the project is concluded. The training of strategically placed frontline staff is seen as a realistic way of addressing digital literacy for many who fall within the priority. Indeed, this is the primary focus of the successor project to Communities 2.0.

9. DIGITAL CHAMPIONS NETWORK

Volunteers play an integral role in delivering digital drop-in sessions and allow for a much higher staff to client ratio as would otherwise be possible.

Digital Champion volunteers are a key element in digital inclusion initiatives as there is much mutual benefit to be had for both volunteers and for the organisations working with them. Given that mentoring and supporting digitally excluded individuals in their journey towards getting online often requires a lot of individual attention and ideally at least partial one-to-one engagement, it is not difficult to see why volunteers have such an important role to play. By volunteering to help out during drop-in sessions, more tutors are present, thus allowing the digital drop-in to be more flexible and individualised when it comes to different individual learning preferences. In other words, without volunteers, drop-in sessions would either have to assume a more classroom style character, or less time could be dedicated to each learner and their own unique relationship with digital technologies. More experienced volunteers, with the support of an established volunteer-involving organisation, are also in a position to take the lead in running drop-ins or other digital inclusion sessions. This is important especially in the context of Communities 2.0 only being able to guarantee their ability to pay for professional 'sessional tutors' until the end of March 2015. With that date in mind, unless additional resources can be found, skilled volunteers have to be key actors in 'exit strategies' seeking to ensure the continuity of digital inclusion activities.

It is not only organisations involved in delivering digital inclusion activities that benefit a lot from working with volunteers, but being a Digital Champion is also a rewarding opportunity for the volunteers themselves. Without the need for any particular qualifications or skillsets, they are able to leverage their everyday, basic computer knowledge for attaining valuable teaching experience. Through this, they can increase their employability both in a variety of people-centred occupations as well as keep their CV up to date if they have previously worked in teaching or IT and are looking to return to these fields. Finally, irrespective of employment outcomes, volunteering in digital inclusion can be a worthwhile and highly rewarding experience as the impact in terms of learners' progress and the feeling of 'having made a difference' materialises as quickly as during a single drop-in session.

A partial Digital Champion scheme has been set up by Get the Vale Online. Training participants have been either referred by the Vale Volunteer Bureau (VVB) or consisted of existing volunteers involved in digital inclusion activities who had not yet benefited from dedicated Digital Champion training.

The full Digital Champions scheme is outlined below:

1) Volunteer recruitment: At this first stage, volunteers express an interest to become Digital Champions either directly to Get the Vale Online or are referred by a partner organisation. A generic Digital Champion opportunity was also advertised online at

volunteering-wales.net. Further to this, flyers were distributed, and interested individuals could also find out about volunteering opportunities through the Get the Vale Online Website.

2) Interested volunteers were offered the opportunity to participate in a free one day Digital Champions training session, where they received the Get the Vale Online Digital Inclusion Manual as well as a wide range of other information on the topic of digital inclusion.

3) Those volunteers who were interested in progressing further were subsequently given the opportunity to shadow experienced tutors during one or two drop-in sessions in order to gain confidence and practical experience.

4) Once volunteers had completed both the training and shadowing elements of the scheme, they would receive a certificate. While the certificate carried no accredited qualification, there were ideas that an accreditation may be possible through Vale Adult Community Learning in future schemes.

5) Once volunteers had completed the training element of the Digital Champions scheme, they were ready to begin volunteering. At this stage we would look to identify volunteering opportunities for the volunteers – for example, linking them with a drop-in tutor or project partner.

6) In order to ensure volunteer retention as well as progression into employment where possible, volunteers would continue to remain part of the Digital Champions network. Newydd Housing has offered to open up all their training programmes for free to Digital Champions, as could other partner organisations when approached. In terms of volunteer rewards, quarterly meetings with an element of free refreshments could be arranged, again with the support of Newydd Housing. Through the Vale Volunteer Bureau, Digital Champions can also link into volunteer-hour logging and appreciation schemes such as the Millennium Volunteer or Star Volunteer awards.

LOOKING AHEAD

Given the ongoing uncertainties about funding for digital inclusion projects and the availability of Communities 2.0 funded sessional tutors, a well-functioning Digital Champion scheme is one of the main ways in which digital inclusion can be carried forward even without external funding sources. In terms of the volunteers who have been trained through this project, 6 are now linked in with the Digital Champions Network.

10. THE WEBSITE

The project was marketed in a number of different ways, including:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Local news outlets
- Via strategic networking
- A website

Given the digital nature of the project, the development of a comprehensive website was seen as an essential component of the marketing strategy. The website played a crucial role in the promotion of the project and mapped the provision of publically accessible digital inclusion resources, such as information on free Wi-Fi hotspots and drop-in sessions. A digital copy of the training manual is also freely available from the website, along with other useful resources.

The website was set up in Wordpress – a cost effective option that provided robust design flexibility and an easy to use content management system, as well as free hosting. The site has received 1788 unique views since it was published and is currently accessible via the following URL: www.getthevaleonline.org.uk.

LOOKING AHEAD

Given the low cost associated with maintaining the site (maintaining ownership of the domain name), it is hoped that there will be scope for the website to persist beyond the end of the project. In order for the site to remain useable, it will require some ongoing maintenance to update the drop-in timetable. It is hoped that this responsibility can be met by a member of the steering group.

11. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the past 9 months, a large amount of progress has been made in terms of the promotion of digital inclusion. While it is true that the Vale of Glamorgan on the whole is a relatively prosperous region of Wales, there are still areas of deprivation. The work achieved by the project has helped many take their first steps on the path to becoming digitally literate, while the frontline staff training, along with the training manual and the strategic network, will ensure a successful legacy for the project.

Below is an outline of the project’s accomplishments in relation to the targets that were initially set, along with a summary of what went well and delivery challenges.

BENEFICIARY TARGETS

All of the beneficiary targets were exceeded:

Target Description	Proposal Target	Target Achieved	% Achieved	Variance
Beneficiaries	260	383	147%	+47%
Volunteers	10	22	220%	+120%
Frontline staff	50 (to be counted in the beneficiary total)	55	110%	+10%

WHAT WENT WELL

- The Initiative was positively led by VCVS who championed Get the Vale Online strategically.
- Within the Vale of Glamorgan there are a number of organisations that have an active role in delivering digital inclusion. This enabled the initiative to build on those foundations and bring together a co-ordinated plan of support and delivery.
- The Get the Vale Online steering group was very well supported with representation from many organisations.
- Frontline staff was delivered to 55 library staff out of 62. Frontline staff training evaluation was hugely positive with all participants rating the training as excellent with all feeling more confident in helping members of the public.
- The second edition of the training manual was very well received and has been used by other organisations.
- The Get the Vale Online operational group worked well with all partners meeting to discuss ideas. This reduced the possibility of duplication.

DELIVERY CHALLENGES

- It was difficult to get staff to commit to seven hours of frontline staff training. This was especially difficult with library staff. This was overcome by reducing the training sessions to three hours.

- Strategic engagement with the local authority was difficult at the start of the project. However this changed in the last quarter and the local authority has since recruited a digital champion who is leading on developing their digital inclusion strategy.
- The initial Get the Vale Online Co-ordinator left the post at the end of October and was not replaced until the beginning of December (FT), leading to a break in delivery.
- Ensuring that training material was appropriate and of good quality - the initial frontline staff training packs needed updating and improving with more appropriate information.
- Initially there were some issues of duplication/competition of drop-in sessions in the Barry area. This was rectified with the establishment of an operations group that also supported beneficiary referral.

Kris Rees & Andreas Karpati

Get the Vale Online, 2015