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Foreword

I am delighted to endorse this start up pack for local networks.

It is well overdue and I know that it would certainly have saved me a lot of time and energy if this had been available to me when I started working on Bradford VYON some years ago.

In autumn 2005 VYON succeeded in gaining Change Up funding to produce this pack within the Regional Infrastructure Development Plan, and we are delighted that it has been completed so quickly and on time. I am extremely grateful to Tom Taylor for competently producing this pack within a very tight time scale so that its contents can be made available to emerging networks early this year. I would also thank all those individuals and organisations who responded to Tom's request for information and good practice.

The number of issues facing a group of Voluntary Youth Organisations wishing to organise around areas of common concern are immense. Decisions need to be taken about purpose, capacity, practicality, funding, sustainability, accountability, relationships internally and externally, representation, training – to mention just a few! Whilst the list can seem never ending to the hard pressed committee or co-ordinator this pack succeeds in placing the issues in a systematic, coherent order, as well as outlining the key values necessary for successful collaborative working.

Whilst this pack is aimed at helping new networks become established in the first place I believe it also provides an opportunity for existing ones to usefully review policies that may have been on the shelf sometime. This pack will help local voluntary youth sector networks work better and hence will enable their constituent members to become stronger, more effective youth organisations.

I commend this excellent tool for the sector.



Kerr Kennedy

Chair

VYON Yorkshire and the Humber

Introducing the Start Up Pack

Introduction

Welcome to the VYON (Voluntary Youth Organisations Network) Start Up Pack – or ‘how to grow your own VYON’ as it is subtitled.

VYONs grow well in our climate. We have a good earthy culture of voluntary activity here ‘up North’, enhanced by common sense and a healthy ability not to take ourselves too seriously.

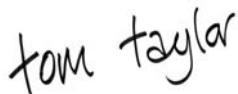
Once VYON’s are established, with good strong roots, they can provide fruit and shelter for the sector for many years. They do need some support and regular refreshment, as do VYON Coordinators.

OK, that’s enough of the ‘growing’ metaphor for now!

Networks are about people and relationships first and foremost, and so it is no surprise that voluntary sector networks of those involved in youth work can be some of the strongest, most principled and effective networks.

The pack draws on the experience of those supporting networks. I have brought my own experience of being a community development worker and trainer for many years, and my current work (since July 04) developing a VYON in Kirklees.

If you have any comments on the pack, or suggestions for additions or changes, or if you want further copies, please contact Bill Eve at VYON Yorkshire & Humber on 0113 270 3595.



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Thanks

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Simon Harrison, North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations

Steve Barna, Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum

Sue Bradley, York Council for Voluntary Service

Jane Tedder, Manchester Youth Arts Network

Ruth Sykes, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Forum

Apologies to anyone who contributed who I have missed off this list. Thanks again.



Purpose of the pack

The purpose of the VYON Start Up Pack is to provide useful information, ideas and resources to those who are developing Voluntary Youth Organisation Networks.

The pack is particularly aimed at those setting up networks in local authority areas where there is not already some sort of network. By learning from what has worked in other areas, we hope that you can grow stronger, more effective, more sustainable voluntary sector networks.

Those who already have a network and want to develop it further may be able to learn from the pack, too.

Who is the pack for?

This pack is written to be used by network coordinators – people paid or unpaid who have taken on the responsibility of initiating, developing or sustaining a voluntary sector network.

This could be a small team or group of workers (paid or unpaid), but often it is one person who may or may not have others to help with particular tasks such as administration and information work.

This pack assumes you have some understanding of the aims and values of youth and children's work, of the way voluntary and community organisations work and an awareness of the Every Child Matters outcomes and the Children Act 2004.

The pack may also be useful to those who are considering raising funds in order to pay for a network coordinator.

How to use this pack

Each section is fairly self contained, with references to other sections where appropriate. Therefore, you can dip in wherever something looks to be relevant to you.

If you have recently taken on this responsibility and you are developing a new network, then I would recommend that you read the Preparing the Ground section as a whole before looking at other sections. I consider the Principles and Practice section to be equally important, but then I'm a bit old fashioned like that.

The 'sample documents' section has examples of documents from those who have done what you might be trying to do. They are not intended to be ideal or model documents – they are freely shared so that you can learn from them, adapt them or avoid their mistakes.

Please use them responsibly, particularly in relation to funding applications, and remember that criteria, priorities and needs change with time and across different areas.



Preparing the Ground

This section is about understanding why voluntary sector networks are useful, particularly now, and thinking about what approaches will suit your circumstances.

Why have a VYON?

Voluntary and community organisations are independent and autonomous – they decide how they organise themselves, what their priorities are and how they are going to work towards them. Some are large, some are part of national structures, and some are employers of a number of staff, while others are not. Some serve particular communities while others work on particular issues across wide areas. This diversity of the sector is strength, but also a weakness.

A voluntary sector network can help strengthen the sector by improving communication and information sharing, and by building relationships which can lead to cooperation and partnership working rather than continued competition for funding. Sharing perspectives and approaches can help organisations to avoid duplication of work and learn from each other, so improving both the quality and quantity of service available to the children, young people and families that benefit from them.

Also, things are changing nationally and locally in relation to services for children, young people and families. If you've been involved in this sort of work for a while you may be a little 'change weary' – there's always some new initiative or reorganisation. However, this would be to underestimate the scale of the current changes.

The Every Child Matters green paper, published in September 2003 laid out the five outcomes that everyone working with children and young people should aim to achieve for every child. The Children Act 2004 went on to specify how local authorities and others should structure themselves, work together and plan to make sure these outcomes are achieved. These have been called "Children's Trust Arrangements" by the Government.

There are also changes in the relationship between local and central government. Funds are being pooled and the local authority is to be given greater freedom and flexibility to decide how to meet local needs.

The voluntary sector can and should be involved in these arrangements – including identifying needs, preparing plans, deciding on commissioning arrangements and being commissioned to deliver services.

Why is it important to engage with the Children and Young People's Trust?

- Children and Young People's Trusts will put together an overall plan for services for young people in their area. You ...(voluntary youth organisations)...have a chance to contribute to this, to ensure that it reflects the best interests of the young people you work for.

- Ways of front line working are going to change. Services for children and young people will be working much more closely together. *There may be great benefits in closer partnership arrangements e.g shared training costs, shared use of buildings.* If you receive or make referrals to statutory agencies, you need to know what these changes are going to be.
- Funding arrangements are going to change. If you currently receive funding from the local authority or benefit from local authority funded services e.g. CVYS, you need to know what the priorities for the Trust are going to be.

Tessa Hibbert, page 1 – see ‘useful websites and publications section’

However, to do this effectively the voluntary sector needs to get organised. It needs to be able to contact those in the sector, and to set up ways of organisations coming together to speak collectively sometimes. A voluntary sector network can help support this.

“To be effective, formal partnerships need to be rooted in informal processes of networking, characterised by a sense of trust, co-operation and mutual advantage.”

Research finding, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1996,
www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/government/G45.asp

What is the voluntary and community sector?

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations website says that a voluntary organisation is “a self-governing body of people who have joined together voluntarily to take action for the benefit of the community, and established otherwise than for financial gain.”

There are other criteria such as being fair and accessible, having a public statement of aims, and not being part of a political party, but the general idea is that it is an independent, not-for-profit organisation for social benefit that is not part of local or national government. Some voluntary organisations are large, and work all across the country.

A community organisation is a voluntary organisation which is focused on a particular community – a locality or a community of interest. This might be a village or estate, or a particular ethnic group or age group in a town or city. Sometimes faith organisations are included as ‘community organisations’ and sometimes they are identified separately – so the sector might be described as the voluntary, community and faith sector.

Many community organisations are very small, relying on one or two committed volunteers, and so may need more support or encouragement to get involved in a local voluntary sector network.

The development of social enterprises and the creation of arms-length organisations set up by local authorities to access other funding, along with the dominance of local and national government in the funding of the voluntary sector has begun to blur the distinctions between statutory, voluntary and private organisations.

What is a voluntary sector network?

The word 'network' often means different things to different people. Some so called 'networks' are actually organisations or committees which liked the sound of 'network' and so included it in their name. While groups can call themselves whatever they like, this does mean we often are not clear about what a network is and how it differs from other sorts of structures.

Alison Gilchrist describes what networks are in relation to community work:

“Networks are based on informal membership. They assume that all members are equal (though this is not usually the case in practice). They do not have a hierarchical structure, and usually have no formal policies. Their main purpose is to share information, ideas and support. Participation is optional.” (The community work skills manual, p77)

This is a useful definition because it emphasises that a formal structure is not necessary. Networks do not have to meet regularly, have a Chairperson and Secretary, have a constitution etc. They are primarily about relationships between people who have something in common - for example, being voluntary organisations working with young people in a specific area.

Some sort of network often exists informally, as people often know of each other through meetings and social events. They may share information – but many of the relationships may be weak or exclusive to a few people. This fits well with Alison's description above.

The kinds of networks this pack is concerned with are those that are actively supported by someone. This person aims to strengthen these relationships, improve communication and help new people to join the network.

There are a number of different approaches to setting up a network. Some of the things to consider are explored in the next section.

Options and models

Before we get into specific tasks for strengthening or developing networks, think for a moment about how the network might work.

A common set up is this:

- The voluntary sector network will have a coordinator, who is employed by a local voluntary organisation.
- They maintain a database of contacts, and when they receive information which may or may not be useful to network members, and they filter, translate, summarise and distribute it – perhaps through a website, emails, publications or meetings.
- Coordinators may also organise briefings, meetings and forums to share and enable network members to feedback and share information and they may be invited as a 'voluntary sector representative' onto planning or commissioning bodies.
- They will probably do lots of other things in response to local changes or opportunities, too.

With this as a basic model, there are some issues to consider:

1. **Governance** – it's worth working out a clear system for accountability for the coordinator, or else they could end up being accountable to the funders, a steering group, a management committee and a line manager – all who have different expectations! My recommendation is to keep it simple. (see sample documents - 9 – accountability map).
2. **Objectives** – what is the network for? The section on 'what is a network' emphasised the 'strengthening relationships' and 'sharing information' function of network development. This is entirely acceptable. However, a network should be as useful to its members as possible, and if it wants to focus on creating consortiums and other partnerships for funding and contracting, then so be it!
3. **Communication** – often the coordinator will act as a 'hub' for information as described above. However, it may be that there are other ways of getting information out. Perhaps there is a Community Empowerment Network in your area, which regularly organises events and distributes information. Perhaps there is a website or publication which is seen as the source of accurate information. Perhaps there are a series of local networks, which have their own meetings, or systems that you could tap into.
4. **Membership** – membership of networks is often informal, with people opting in by sharing information with others in the network, and opting out by stopping communicating. Some networks have formalised membership. Whether you have formal membership or not, there are advantages to having some sort of process for registering network members:
 - You can count your members and use this number as an indicator of success for funders and others;
 - You can use the process of registering membership to collect information about members' organisations size, resources, activities or concerns.
 - You can obtain Data Protection permission to hold and use their contact details in your database.
 - You can keep track of how old the information you have is, and take steps to update it.

In Kirklees, individuals involved with voluntary organisations working with children and young people can join the VYON. To do so they give contact details and information about their organisation and sign it to give data protection permission to the VYON Coordinator to use and share it. Members receive newsletters and funding information, while those who have not joined are included in general email updates and invites to events.

In Bradford, the VYON maintains a database of contacts and organises regular meetings or briefings, but does not have a formal membership system. Anyone is welcome to attend and can receive the newsletter by requesting that they are on the mailing list.

VYON Coordinator posts

VYON Coordinators, or similar posts, are now in place in all West Yorkshire local authority areas, thanks to funding from Connexions West Yorkshire, among others. In other parts of the region funding has been gained for Co-ordinator posts from TYWPIF (Transforming Youth Work Improving Performance Funds), Local Authority Youth Services, other sections of the Local Authority, the Children's Fund, as well as ConneXions.

These posts are different in each area, but tend to include the requirement to maintain a database of contacts, to distribute information and to support voluntary sector involvement in working effectively and participating in decision making. Where funded by Connexions there are some specific Connexions related objectives.

Apart from these requirements, VYON Coordinators have had few restrictions. This has enabled them to inform, organise and structure the voluntary youth sector in ways that the sector trust and understand. Some have widened the age range from the Connexions 13-19; to include the whole of the 0-19 age range that the Children Act 2004 is concerned with.

An example of a funding proposal for VYON Coordinators is in the sample documents section (sample documents – 1: funding proposal), and there is an example of a job description and person specification in sample documents – 10.



Principles and practice

This section encourages you to think about the basic principles and values behind developing a network. These draw heavily on the principles and values of youth and community development work, and provide a basic starting point.

- Recognise inequality and work to promote social justice
- Encourage self-determined, autonomous groups and organisations
- Promote participation in decision-making and cooperation
- Share and develop knowledge for wider benefit

What's the use of a network?

Strong, well organised local voluntary sector networks are useful to lots of people – the voluntary and community organisations involved, the statutory agencies who want to communicate with them, those planning for the future who want to understand what is there already, and regional and national organisations who want to link with local networks.

Below is a checklist of what others might consider 'useful', though you may well have your own ideas to add. This might help you explain what the network aims to do, and what your priorities are.

- Collating, translating and distributing information to the sector
- Maintain a database of key organisations and contacts in the sector
- Identifying what activities or support is offered by the sector
- Building trust and relationships between those involved in the sector
- Sending information out to the sector to promote events, training etc
- Organising regular meetings and events for the sector
- Providing personal support to individuals, and to organisations
- Helping the community groups and voluntary organisations to raise funds
- Start-up/development support for new and existing organisations
- Consulting with the sector on policies and proposals
- Analysing the sectors capacity, available resources or training needs
- Celebrating achievements and good practice in the sector locally and so raising the profile with the public and funders
- Organising others to represent the sector at a strategic planning level
- Representing the sector at a strategic planning level
- Managing and facilitating appropriate training for managers, staff & volunteers of networked organisations

Network autonomy and independence

The network you are supporting may be the only collective structure for the voluntary youth sector in your area. This is a significant responsibility, and is why this pack emphasises the need to be principled, fair, inclusive and balanced about this work.

Autonomy and independence is a key factor in creating a successful and respected network. This may mean resisting pressure or influence from other organisations or individuals to work in a particular way or to make particular decisions.

Funders may have set criteria for you to work to, and your employing organisation may want to draw on the network for other purposes to help its development. Similarly, you may have your own hopes and ideas, including keeping yourself in a job or showing what an excellent network coordinator you are to help your career.

By focusing on the needs of the sector (see section above), you can mediate against some of these distractions, and avoid being drawn into arrangements that compromise the autonomy and independence of the voluntary sector network.

If you are thinking about setting up a network and employing a coordinator, consider whether you are best placed to do it.

The key functions of a voluntary sector network are about collating and distributing information, maintaining a list of contacts and organising events and meetings that are useful to the sector.

In theory, any agency could do this. However, in practice, those coordinating the network have a degree of power as they are in a position where they decide what information to distribute and how, and will decide how to structure the network to support its strategic influence or participation in decision making.

Therefore, it is important that the network is not coordinated by an organisation that may have a conflict of interest.

For example, the local authority youth service may want to see a voluntary sector able to deliver a wide range of youth services across the area, and respond to consultations – but be unlikely to support the sector in lobbying for the wholesale contracting out of youth service provision.

Similarly, a voluntary organisation which itself delivers services to children or young people may not be perceived by the wider sector to be neutral in its network coordination role.

So, network coordination should probably be either an umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector – a CVS, CVYS or Voluntary Action – or an independent organisation which does not itself deliver services to children or young people and so is not competing for funds and contracts.

Ideally, it will be an established organisation with a good track record of working with voluntary and community organisations. This will help it create a database, and develop an understanding of the sectors needs and priorities, and will provide a good starting point for relationships with statutory agencies.

Maintaining autonomy and independence is also important as a network develops. Network coordinators, or key people taking on responsibilities on behalf of the network can be drawn into positions of influence as members of

boards or committees which require them to not share information or to present a corporate position on an issue.

What's in a name?

There is often confusion about the different structures and arrangements that we develop in order to work together. This section aims to help you think through what structure is most appropriate for what you are trying to do, and what to call the 'get togethers' you develop.

It's helpful if these 'get togethers' have a name that makes it easy to understand what it does. The name also helps to set the expectations of the group or forum for new people or other organisations.

Here is a suggestion about how to use the words 'forum', 'group' and 'committee'. See the Preparing the Ground section for a discussion about the word 'network'.

Forums are usually made up of whoever turns up, and tend not to have defined membership. Their purpose is to explore or discuss a topic, and bring a wide range of perspectives to that discussion. They don't have responsibility for resources. They may or may not come to any shared conclusions, but will generate a range of views. Forums are sometimes called open meetings, consultations, discussions, network meetings and events.

Groups usually meet regularly and often have a particular responsibility or purpose that they aim to progress each meeting. Membership can be defined, so that groups are closed, though some groups are open to newcomers. They may have some of the responsibilities of committees. There is usually a core of regular attendees. Groups are sometimes called teams.

Committees are usually more formal groups, with a defined (often selected) membership making decisions at each meeting. Committees may have substantial responsibilities such as employing staff or allocating budgets. Committees are also called boards or management groups.

Representation

Representation is a thorny issue for many in the voluntary sector because there are those who sit on boards and management groups as 'representatives' who do not 'represent' the wider sectors views.

There are also issues of accountability, with informal processes for selecting 'reps' meaning that the usual suspects are the only ones included. These same informal arrangements make it difficult for representatives to know what is expected of them, and create all kinds of problems when their position is questioned.

Representation of the voluntary youth sector, with its diverse perspectives and needs, is always going to be difficult. There will usually be several answers to the question 'what does the voluntary sector think?'

As network coordinator, you may be asked to represent the sectors views. While you may have a good overview of the sector and be able to make an important contribution, you should resist the temptation to claim to be the voice of the sector.

It is a much better for the sector to have a network coordinator who can support others in representing the variety of views from the sector. This is also much more sustainable, because if the coordinator moves on, or does not secure funding for their work, the sector can continue to be represented by a number of people.

The key elements of representation are:

- **Selection:** Is there an open and fair process by which representatives put themselves forward, and are selected?
- **Accountability:** Do they report back in some way to the sector, and is there a way for the wider sector to communicate with them?
- **Removability:** Is there a way to remove representatives who do not do a good job? This might be by not electing them when the next election comes around.

In Kirklees there are 'Voluntary Sector Links' rather than representatives on each of the strategic bodies. A 'Link' agrees to produce a short summary of the meeting for distribution to others in the sector, via newsletters and a website. 'Links' also attend the twice yearly forum that aims to organise and inform voluntary sector strategic influence on children and young people's issues. This forum can replace 'Links' who have not attended meetings or produced any summaries.

In Leeds, there are full postal elections for representatives on strategic bodies, with all those registered with the network eligible to vote and stand for election.

However, it is important to realise that voluntary sector representatives are often taking on the role in addition to their existing paid or voluntary commitments, and as such are volunteers in need of support. As a network coordinator you may be the first line of support, helping them prepare for meetings, feedback and consult with the wider network.

Strategic influence

The voluntary sector is growing in size and influence as it increasingly takes on the delivery of services from statutory agencies. The Government is keen to see the sector move in this direction, but recognises that there are barriers to the sector participating fully.

Some of these barriers are about the capacity of the sector to engage with contracting, commissioning and procurement processes, but other barriers are about these processes themselves or the priorities that have been identified. A key decision for small groups, for example, is how much funding will be available in grants, or other sources of non-contract funding.

The decisions about these processes and priorities are often made at a strategic level – with boards and committees making decisions with little or no input from the voluntary and community sector. Large statutory agencies can find it difficult to communicate effectively with the diverse, non-hierarchical voluntary and community sector.

A voluntary sector network can provide a mechanism to support communication, and can also present an opportunity for the sector to come together and organise itself to strengthen its strategic influence.

Many network coordinators will organise specific meetings, structures or consultations to ensure that the perspectives of a range of voluntary and community organisations are communicated to decision makers. In some areas this is the main reason for having a network.

The effective organisation of the sectors strategic influence can significantly increase the ability of voluntary organisations to shape policy and resource decisions. As such, it is important that these arrangements are fair, transparent, proactive and responsive.

The role of the coordinator is a key one. It is important that coordinators remain true to their principles of supporting and informing voluntary sector participation, and do not allow themselves to become too personally involved in local political manoeuvrings or deals. See section on 'network autonomy and independence' for more discussion on this.

In Bradford, strategic influence is exerted on two levels. Firstly, to 'youth only' matters through a partnership developed with the local authority youth service and secondly to the wider agenda through being a key driver of the newly formed Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership VCS Group.

In North Yorkshire the coordinator has recently been invited to attend meetings of the youth service senior management team, raising the potential for directly influencing plans for commissioning and delivery.

In Sunderland, the forum has several staff and representatives from member organisations who have adopted a number of strategies in order to influence decision making. They attend formal meetings, lobby, advocate on others behalf and have had one-off meetings with key decision makers. This has achieved positive outcomes in several developmental areas.

In Kirklees, the 'strategic influence' part of the work is under the name of the Kirklees Children's VAN. The VAN stands for Voluntary Action Network. This is a forum – open to all in the sector to attend – which meets twice a year. It receives reports from those who attend strategic meetings across Kirklees, and organises presentations relevant to the planning of services to children and young people. Those interested in strategic issues can get involved in the Children's VAN, while those who are not can still join the VYON to be in the information loop.



New Networks

Setting up a network - where there hasn't been any sort of structured work done to bring voluntary organisations working with children and young people together before - is a particular challenge.

The key to a successful start is finding out what is there already – perhaps localised or informal networks – building good relationships with key contacts, and building up trust and credibility in your own work.

Then it's all about getting the resources to ensure the work gets done, being inclusive and making it happen. Nothing to it really!

Mapping the area

'Mapping' in this context means simply finding out what is there. To map the voluntary sector is often an ongoing task as there are many community and faith groups that do not have much of a presence outside of their community, and information is often out of date quickly.

However, someone somewhere usually has some of the information you need - so you shouldn't have to start from scratch. Begin by talking to the Council for Voluntary Service (or similar umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector). Then go to the local authority's library service, youth service, democratic support service etc and ask about contacts in the voluntary sector working with children and young people. There may be regeneration bodies or local funders who also have contact information.

Once you have some contacts, start contacting people and arranging to visit them. Remember this is not just to collect contacts, it is about beginning to develop relationships – but if you do manage to hit it off, and you ask for them, you will often come away from the meeting with a few more contacts.

Set up a database or spreadsheet and put in the details you have gathered. You might want to get a map and begin plotting where organisations are based – so you can easily see if there are some areas you know little about. If you do not feel confident in your I.T. skills your local CVS or Local Authority may be prepared to help you with specific tasks or training. Below are some key contacts to find locally and nationally

Key contacts

Local

- Council for Voluntary Service
- Local Authority Youth/Early Years Service
- Director of Children's Services
- Local Public Service Board for Children's Services
- Local Strategic Partnership
- Children and Young People's Trust
- Community Empowerment Network
- Volunteer Bureau/Centre
- Extended Schools Coordinator
- Local Network Fund

Sub Regional/Regional (see 'useful contacts' section for details)

- Connexions Partnership
- Government Office for Yorkshire & Humber
- VYON Yorks & Humber
- Youth Work Unit Yorkshire and Humber

National (see 'useful contacts' section for details, and other ideas)

- National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
- National Association of Councils for Voluntary Services
- National Council of Voluntary and Community Childcare Organisations
- National Association of Clubs for Young People
- National Youth Agency
- UK Youth
- 4Children (formerly Kids Clubs Network)

Building credibility and trust

It's a delicate balancing act – you have to build relationships with a wide range of people from voluntary sector organisations, so that they trust you to act in their best interests, and you also need to develop credibility with funders and statutory agencies that the network you are supporting is the one that can provide what they need – a coherent body for them to consult and engage with.

You will have more credibility if you are seen to have clear principles. Both voluntary and statutory organisations want to see better outcomes for children and young people – and a voluntary sector network can help them achieve this by harnessing the knowledge and skills of the sector. Focusing on this will help the network and statutory partners explore how they can work together, rather than blaming each other for looking after their own.

Here are some other ideas for building credibility and trust with network members and with other partners:

- Listen and respond quickly. Often people in the voluntary sector have not been listened to by someone with an overview of the sector. If you listen, take them seriously, and do something (however small) to help, then you will be seen as an ally. When someone sends out a general request for ideas, comments or feedback, respond if you can. They will be so used to getting little or nothing back that they will be very grateful.
- Keep your promises promptly – whether to get a phone number for someone in a community group or to organise a series of consultation events. If you can't, go back to them and explain why. If you forget or run out of time, contact them to say so. This honesty makes all the difference.
- Write a simple workplan, with clear achievable targets and timescales for some key areas of work. Give a first draft to one or two key partners, making it clear that you would welcome their comments. Review progress after a few months, pointing out how the network has developed – not just how great you have done!
- Form a one-off 'panel' to look at a consultation document or proposal. Organise a meeting, ask people to read the document before, record all comments and feed it back to the agency concerned. This might involve

only half a dozen people, but it shows that you are willing to engage with the wider agenda and that you can take action. Make sure your panel includes people from a range of organisations and groups. Statutory agencies will welcome a clear response to their proposal, even if it comes with conditions stating that it is not the views of the whole sector, just a small selection.

Network Coordination Costs

Networks rarely coordinate themselves, because people have lots of other things to do. It often has to be someone's responsibility and often they need paying for it.

As with all funding arrangements, pay close attention to the requirements in the contract. They may require you to undertake work that can be very time consuming, such as collecting and updating detailed information about the sector, or to manage a small grants pot.

Break down the cost of network coordination into parts:

- Staff salary (full time network coordinators salaries are often in the £19-24,000 range)
- on costs (NI, pension etc)/yr (can be 12-21% of salary)
- office costs (including rent, insurance etc)
- operating costs & expenses (including phone, post, events, travel etc)
- Management and support costs (including time for supervision, training, fundraising and often a management fee to the employing organisation)

However, remember that you may need to shape your proposal to particular available funds and criteria. Just take care not to offer more for the money than you can realistically deliver.

Getting money

Local government and many other statutory agencies are required to engage with the voluntary sector to develop plans and deliver services. Many find it difficult to do so, and would welcome a proposal from a voluntary sector organisation to work in partnership with them.

The key is to find the right part of the right agency to approach. Joint commissioning through Children and Young People's Trusts should make this easier in the long term, but in many areas this is not yet clear. Cultivate relationships with some of the key contacts listed above. Some likely sources of funding for voluntary sector networks are:

Children's Trust arrangements

All services for children will be 'joined up' to create local Children's Trust arrangements. This will include a Director of Children's Services who is responsible for all work with children, young people & families in their local authority area. All funding related to work with children and young people – including the other sources listed here – are also likely to come under Children's Trust arrangements.

The expectation is that voluntary organisations will be involved in identifying needs, planning services and delivering services. Each of these areas could potentially provide funding for voluntary sector network support – for supporting effective participation in strategic planning, for helping statutory agencies engage with the sector to identify needs and plan services, or in supporting the sector to get ready to deliver quality services.

The Connexions Partnership¹

Connexions aims to make sure young people aged 13-19 take up education, employment and training opportunities. They work with all partners and are required to show that they work effectively with the voluntary sector.

Children's Fund²

Some voluntary sector networks have been funded through Children's Fund, which aims to support work that prevents children coming to harm or being unable to reach their potential.

Local Authority Youth Service/Education/Early Years³ – who probably already work with some voluntary and community organisations to deliver services, and may be interested in helping the sector to get organised by funding network costs.

Big Lottery Fund, Reaching Communities

Newly announced fund which may be worth exploring for VCS infrastructure support as well as direct delivery of services.

See sample documents - 1 for an example of a proposal that has been successful.

Including people

The key to a successful network is successful relationships, but the strength of a network is in its diversity. However, including those who are often excluded can be time consuming (they may need more chasing up and more support). Similarly, if people are not used to working with others and have a long experience of being excluded they may show their anger and resentment by complaining loudly at the first opportunity – which could be the event or meeting you've organised!

However, having a diverse network will make it more powerful and useful to members, and increase your credibility with statutory agencies who often find it particularly difficult to engage with some groups or communities.

Some examples are:

- Small organisations based in rural communities;
- Organisations working with very minority communities – that is those making up less than 2% of the population;

¹ In 2005, Connexions West Yorkshire directly funds VYON Coordinator posts, but Connexions Partnerships will be absorbed by local Children's Trust Arrangements by 2007

² & ³ Likely to come under Children's Trust Arrangements

- Some faith based organisations which have not been part of mainstream networks;
- Organisations working with very vulnerable young people – offenders, sex workers, drug users;
- Volunteer-led groups such as the uniformed youth organisations;
- Existing networks of excluded or minority groups – gay and lesbian organisations, disabled people’s groups;
- New organisations still working out where they fit and how they work;
- Some social enterprises – should they be treated as businesses or community organisations?

As coordinator, you can help the network to become more inclusive. Here are some suggestions as to how:

When you are beginning to talk to people about the network and about the sector, it is important to acknowledge its diversity and it’s range of concerns. Small community groups may have long memories and local concerns, while a new social enterprise may have a more pragmatic and opportunist approach.

If you have meetings or produce publications, try to make them reflect the range of concerns and issues that the network has. Obviously, you can’t do this in every publication – but avoid them becoming dominated by one section of the network’s concerns.

Consider what you can do to make any events or meetings accessible to all, including daytime or evenings, links to public transport, providing food and/or expenses. You should also consider what might enable those with mobility, hearing or sight impairments to participate fully in the activities.

Consider how you communicate with people from different cultures and experiences to your own – it may be that some are more comfortable with informal face to face conversations, or small meetings, or single sex meetings. It may mean thinking about your training needs.

Find out what the small excluded groups need, and put the time in to listen to them and do what you can to help them meet their needs.

See ‘organising a meeting or event’ section.



Getting organised

Starting a new network can be hard work, but then it depends what you are good at. Some people are great at getting out and about, listening to people, gathering information, analysing it and working out what is needed.

However, it's what you do with all that information that makes the difference. Getting organised, managing information, running events and meetings and keeping it working effectively is the important thing in the long term.

Without it, the network becomes another 'initiative' which doesn't deliver real results or become sustainable longer term. This section is concerned with the practicalities of network coordination – managing contacts, organising meetings and supporting coordinators.

Managing contacts

The list of contact details is the most important resource of the network – because without it you cannot easily communicate with everyone.

Microsoft Office has the Access database program, which will enable you to keep track of all your contacts and produce mailing lists, sort them and find someone's details quickly, no matter how big your database gets.

The general idea is to have separate 'fields' for each piece of information – this allows you to sort or search just that field (e.g. by surname or by town). Also, if you ever want to use these items in a letter, you can use the 'mail merge' feature to send your letter to 'title surname' so that it comes out addressed to them individually.

A basic database will probably have the following fields:

Title	e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr
First Name	
Surname	
Organisation	
Address Line 1	
Address Line 2	
Address Line 3	
Address Line Town	
Address Line Postcode	
Telephone	
Email	
Other info	
Not Public info	
Member of network	These fields are used to filter records or produce targeted mailing lists. You might have different criteria you want to use.
Over 12's only	
Under 5's only	
Date updated	

You can always add other fields later, if you decide to expand the information you want to keep on the database. If it has several hundred records, and each one is lengthy, it may become slow to use.

You will need to get data protection permission to store and use people's information. Generally, this means not storing, using or sharing information without people's permission. However, don't get too paranoid! If you remove people who say they don't want to be on your list, and you only share with others information when you have written permission, you're probably ok. If you want to find out more, <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/> is a good place to start.

See 'sample documents – 5: joining form' for an example of a joining form used by a network to collect information about voluntary sector organisations, and to get data protection permission.

Once you have your database, make it work for you. Set up fields so you can sort and filter out sections of the network – perhaps members only, or those working with teenagers, or divide up your area into smaller areas.

Emailing

Email is fantastic – it's fast, cheap and easy. Many networks use their up to date database details to target emails to those who really will benefit from the information.

However, email can be too easy to overuse to the point where people stop reading your emails. Also, you can spend your whole working life filing, deleting, writing, forwarding and replying to emails and never do anything else! Here are some tips to avoid this happening (some of this is technical, so apologies to the non-anoraks among you):

- Make the 'subject' clear to help people sort through emails. For example: "Agenda for Youth Forum 17/3/06" is better than "Meeting notice".
- Some people don't have broadband or fast computers and downloading large documents or pictures takes ages. Consider cutting the important text out of the document and pasting it into a 'plain text' email instead of sending the attachment. You could send the attachment to those who specifically request it.
- If you have a large email list, put the list in the BCC part of the header. This not only makes the received email smaller (for those without broadband) but also keeps email addresses confidential.
- Don't leave your email program (Outlook for example) open all the time. This way you won't know when an email has come in and won't feel the need to respond straight away.
- Email is great for sharing information, but not for communicating! Don't have discussions by email – use the phone or meet in person. Also, never criticise someone by email. The impersonal nature of email can make it sound worse than it is, and its difficult to put it right by email, too.
- See Top Tips section for other communication ideas.



Organising a meeting or event

Checklist of things to consider:

- Date – give at the very least a weeks notice, but several weeks if you can. For a big meeting you may want to set the date several months in advance to book the date in people's diaries, and send out more information nearer the time.
- Time – daytime meetings tend to get more paid workers, evening meetings more volunteers. Starting a meeting before 10am or after 7pm may create difficulties for those with caring responsibilities who have to travel. You might want to offer food and a networking half an hour, or even an hour before the start of the meeting.
- Duration – aim for two hours maximum of meeting time. If it has to be longer then you need a break, and to change the pace with presentations or small group discussions. If it is necessary to continue over two hours, ask the meeting if it's ok with them.
- Place – think about where people are travelling from (easy to find, transport links, parking), and about how appropriate the space is to what you are trying to do (size, shape, acoustics, feel, status).
- Access – does the venue meet the access needs of all those who may come? Many venues have hearing loops and wheelchair access, or other facilities, so use these venues if possible.
- Agenda – this tells people why they are coming to the meeting and what will happen. It also helps whoever is chairing or running the meeting to keep things flowing and know when it's over. This is especially important for new groups of people – if they experience a meeting or event as well organised, they are more likely to come to future ones.

Typical agenda items are:

1. Welcomes and introductions;
 2. Present & apologies;
 3. Amendments to minutes of last meeting;
 4. Matters arising from last meeting;
 5. Reports;
 6. Decisions and things to do;
 7. Any other business;
 8. Date of next meeting.
- Welcome – when people arrive, welcome them with chat, a drink and help them feel comfortable.
 - Information – not too much, but just enough! Presentation is important – it helps people find their way around the paperwork, and take in the information they are given. Consider a folder and contents page if there are several documents for people to look at.
 - Notes and minutes – keep a record of the meeting, particularly decisions made and where people agreed to do something. Record what they will do and when by. Send minutes out soon after the meeting, and take some spare copies to the next meeting.

Supporting network coordinators

Network coordinators may have a number of different roles, as this pack shows. Sometimes, the demands of these roles conflict.

Here are some tools and ideas for keeping your network coordinator smiling and effective.

1. Formal supervision

Informal support is great, but formal supervision, which looks at the work and the worker and identifies what is working well and what needs more attention is an important tool. Supervision is to "...support the worker by giving them a chance to talk about their work, and help them work effectively... and to provide an official channel for communication between the employee and the employer, to record and resolve any barriers to the worker doing their job." (see sample documents – 8: Supervision policy & agenda)

2. Administrative support

As some of the work is concerned with information management and database maintenance, administrative support is invaluable – particularly when networks are established, membership has grown and it is recognised as a good way of sharing information.

Administrative support can enable the network coordinator to concentrate on developing relationships, strategic planning and organising events and consultation.

Some VYON's have a full time information worker in addition to the full time network coordinator. The information worker may take on responsibility for newsletters and database maintenance.

3. Connexions West Yorkshire Voluntary Sector Forum (see useful contacts)

This forum brings together network coordinators from across West Yorkshire to share information, ideas and perspectives and to coordinate voluntary sector participation in Connexions West Yorkshire. While Connexions is an important part of the forums work, the wider networking and sharing provides an important source of support.

4. Yorkshire & Humber VYON (see useful contacts)

The regional VYON, based at the Youth Work Unit in Leeds, can offer useful advice, contacts and support for anyone wanting to know more about voluntary sector youth networks, as well as organising meetings, briefings and events.



Top tips from network coordinators

- Keep your database simple, up to date and use it regularly. It's the lifeblood of any network.
- Never have more than six items on a meetings agenda.
- Never say never!
- Get dedicated secretarial support for the network coordinator.
- Share responsibilities between more than one person – two heads are better than one.
- Prioritise induction for new network coordinators – take time to go and visit people and listen before you start organising anything.
- Send weekly or two weekly email 'bulletins' rather than bombarding people with hundreds of individual emails they don't read.
- If people take on being local area network representatives then try to get this role agreed with their managers so that it becomes part of their regular job, not a voluntary extra.
- Keep communicating, having meetings – even if they are going through a low period its good to keep the forum space warm.
- Don't underestimate the lack of knowledge about policy initiatives that groups may have - you may think everyone's heard of an initiative but they probably haven't.
- Getting multi agency groups to send papers out to reps well before any meetings - so you can support them going through issues - will reap dividends.
- Value your reps – provide the infrastructure they need to do the business.
- Work with individual groups to pilot roll out of new policy e.g. information sharing, then provide the structure to allow people to cascade the information to others in the sector.
- Have nice food and finish your event/meeting 15 minutes early – so long as you get everything done, they'll love it!
- Ensure that members of the network who take on positions of authority (i.e. chair) are clear that they are acting in that position on behalf of the wider network and not just on their own or for their organisation.
- In light of recent developments in children's services consider whether you need to set up as a 0 – 19 (or 25) network rather than just a youth work network. Perhaps it will be useful to set up sub-groups focussing on different age ranges, such as 0 – 5 (Sure Start, Children's Centres), 6 – 12 (Children's Fund, Extended Schools), and 13 – 19/25 (Extended Schools, Youth Service).
- Be patient, it takes time.
- Evidence your consultation, your successes and the progress that you've made on developing the network.
- Look at areas of best practice and learn from it.

- Be inclusive. This means working at getting people involved, not just sending information to everyone.
- Find a champion for the voluntary sector within the statutory sector.
- Have effective, clear procedures in place so that you can offer a professional service.
- Think bigger and wider. Promote the achievements, strengths and diversity of the whole voluntary sector.
- Establish a small network of like minded people from the sector who can analyse the current situation for your district.
- Look for support from neighbouring districts that may be further developed in their model of approach.
- It is up the voluntary and community sector to ensure their local authority and district players are fully involving them in the new Local Public Service Boards – don't wait for further Government guidance, get involved now!



Useful contacts – national

<p><u>NCVO</u></p> <p><i>The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is the umbrella body for the voluntary sector in England. It works to support the voluntary sector and to create an environment in which voluntary organisations can flourish.</i></p>	<p>020 7713 6161</p> <p>ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk</p> <p>www.ncvo-vol.org.uk</p>
<p><u>NCVYS</u></p> <p><i>National Council for Voluntary Youth Services is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. Useful for getting a voluntary sector perspective on current developments. They have a support network for VYON/CVYS co-ordinators.</i></p>	<p>020 7253 1010</p> <p>mail@ncvys.org.uk</p> <p>www.ncvys.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Community Development Exchange</u></p> <p><i>CDX works to ensure that community development (CD) is recognised and supported as a powerful way of tackling inequality and achieving social justice.</i></p>	<p>0114 270 1718</p> <p>admin@cdx.org.uk</p> <p>www.cdx.org.uk</p>
<p><u>National Association of Clubs for Young People</u></p> <p><i>Our aim is to be the leading voluntary youth organisation in the UK promoting the involvement, enjoyment and achievement of all young people.</i></p>	<p>020 7793 0787</p> <p>office@clubsforyoungpeople.org.uk</p> <p>www.nacyp.org.uk</p>
<p><u>National Association of Councils for Voluntary Services</u></p> <p><i>Helps to promote voluntary and community action by supporting our member CVS and by acting as a national voice for the local voluntary and community sector.</i></p>	<p>0114 278 6636</p> <p>nacvs@nacvs.org.uk</p> <p>www.nacvs.org.uk</p>
<p><u>National Council of Community and Voluntary Childcare Organisations</u></p> <p><i>Our mission is to ensure the well-being and safeguarding of children by promoting the voluntary sector's contribution to the provision of services.</i></p>	<p>020 7833 3319</p> <p>office@NCVCCO.org</p> <p>www.NCVCCO.org</p>

<p><u>National Youth Agency</u></p> <p><i>Supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential within a just society.</i></p>	<p>0116 242 7350</p> <p>nya@nya.org.uk</p> <p>www.nya.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Rural Youth Network</u></p> <p><i>Supports those working with young people in rural areas and campaigns to raise awareness of issues faced by young people living in rural areas</i></p>	<p>0116 242 7441</p> <p>ruralyouth@nya.org.uk</p> <p>www.ruralyouth.com</p>
<p><u>UK Youth</u></p> <p><i>UK Youth exists to develop and promote innovative non-formal education programmes for and with young people - working with them to develop their potential.</i></p>	<p>020 7242 4045</p> <p>info@ukyouth.org</p> <p>www.ukyouth.org</p>
<p><u>4Children (was Kids Clubs Network)</u></p> <p><i>Has a vision of joined up support for children and families in every community, with specialist help for those who need it most.</i></p>	<p>020 7512 2112</p> <p>www.4Children.org.uk</p>

Useful contacts – regional and local

<p><u>Bradford Voluntary Youth Organisations Network.</u></p> <p><i>VYON is a network of 240 voluntary youth organisations (at the last count!) from the Bradford district.</i></p>	<p>01274 722772</p> <p>vyon@bradfordcvs.org.uk</p> <p>www.bradfordcvs.org.uk/vyon.htm</p>
<p><u>Connexions Humber</u></p> <p><i>Connexions provides advice and support to 13-19 year olds (and up to 25 for those with extra needs) around employment, education, training and voluntary work opportunities.</i></p>	<p>01482 350 150</p> <p>www.connexionshumber.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Connexions South Yorkshire</u></p> <p><i>See above.</i></p>	<p>0114 261 9393</p> <p>www.connexionssy.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Connexions West Yorkshire</u></p> <p><i>See above.</i></p>	<p>01484 727500</p> <p>www.connexionswestyorkshire.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Connexions York & North Yorkshire</u></p> <p><i>See above.</i></p>	<p>01904 799 937</p> <p>www.connexionsyorkandnorthyorkshire.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Government Office Yorks & Humber</u></p> <p><i>The Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber works with organisations across the Region to deliver Government policies and programmes and to contribute a regional perspective in their development.</i></p>	<p>0113 280 0600</p> <p>yhenquiries@goyh.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>www.goyh.gov.uk</p>
<p><u>Kirklees Children's VAN</u></p> <p><i>Kirklees area forum, supported by VYON-K for voluntary and community organisations, which aims to organise and inform the sectors strategic influence locally. (VAN = Voluntary Action Network).</i></p>	<p>01484 518457</p> <p>www.childrensvan.org.uk</p>

<p><u>Leeds VOICE</u></p> <p><i>Leeds Voice provides a way for the voluntary, community, faith sector to be represented at all levels of decision making in the city.</i></p>	<p>0113 277 2227</p> <p>info@leedsvoice.org.uk</p> <p>www.leedsvoice.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum</u></p> <p><i>Aims to promote and represent the interests of the voluntary youth sector in Sunderland</i></p>	<p>01915 203643</p> <p>steve@svsyf.org.uk</p>
<p><u>VYON Kirklees</u></p> <p><i>The Voluntary Youth Organisations Network for Kirklees is open to any individual involved in a voluntary or community organisation working with children or young people in Kirklees</i></p>	<p>01484 518457</p> <p>vyon@voluntaryactionkirklees.co.uk</p> <p>www.vyonkirklees.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Wakefield Voluntary Youth Organisations Network</u></p> <p><i>To represent, support, strengthen and develop voluntary and community organisations in the Wakefield district in their work with young people.</i></p>	<p>01977 614300</p> <p>wvyon@fun-damental.org</p> <p>www.wvyon.org</p>
<p><u>York CVS</u></p> <p><i>Council for Voluntary Services in York aims to benefit York “by quickening the spirit of fellowship and social service and undertaking and assisting in social work and activities, and the promotion of social welfare of every kind”.</i></p>	<p>01904 621133</p> <p>yorkcvs@yorkcvs.org.uk</p> <p>www.yorkcvs.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Yorkshire & Humber VYON</u></p> <p><i>Aims to represent, support, strengthen & develop voluntary and community organisations in their work with young people.</i></p>	<p>0113 270 3595</p> <p>vyon@youthworkunit.com</p> <p>www.youthworkunit.com</p>
<p><u>Youth Work Unit – Yorkshire and Humber</u></p> <p><i>The strategic youth work development agency in the region - working across the voluntary and statutory sectors offering advice and information on a wide range of issues</i></p>	<p>0113 270 3595</p> <p>www.youthworkunit.com</p>

<p><u>Youth Arts Network Yorkshire</u></p> <p><i>It is the mission of YANY to be a regional force for Youth Arts, to support, promote and speak up for youth arts work and practitioners in the region, and to gain a higher profile for the region's best practice.</i></p>	<p>07971 910 869</p> <p>0113 270 3595</p> <p>yany@youthworkunit.com</p> <p>www.youthworkunit.com/yany</p>
<p><u>Community Foundation for Calderdale</u></p> <p>Support a network for anyone involved with voluntary and community groups working with 0-24 year olds in Calderdale.</p>	<p>01422 438731</p> <p>www.cffc.co.uk</p>

Useful websites & publications

<p><u>Every Child Matters</u></p> <p><i>This government website is regularly updated and has all the key reports and policy information.</i></p>	<p>www.everychildmatters.gov.uk</p>
<p><u>Manchester Youth Arts Network</u></p> <p><i>An example of a mostly web based network promoting youth arts. Not just voluntary sector, but lots of voluntary sector involvement.</i></p>	<p>0161 234 4238</p> <p>www.manchesteryoutharts.org</p>
<p><u>0-19 Journal</u></p> <p><i>0-19 is a monthly magazine and website aimed at everyone interested in helping children and young people make the most of their lives.</i></p>	<p>01444 475612</p> <p>www.0-19.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Young People Now</u></p> <p><i>The latest news and information on every aspect of working with young people aged 11 to 25 in a weekly journal.</i></p>	<p>020 8606 7500</p> <p>www.ypnmagazine.com</p>
<p><u>Network</u></p> <p>Newsletter of the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services.</p> <p>NCVYS also provide a 'strategic bulletin'.</p>	<p>020 7253 1010</p> <p>mail@ncvys.org.uk</p> <p>www.ncvys.org.uk</p>
<p><u>DfES</u></p> <p>Department for Education and Skills website – includes school league tables etc, but also extensive publications for download.</p>	<p>www.dfes.gov.uk</p>
<p><u>North East Lincolnshire children and young person's directory of services/groups</u></p> <p>FISH = Future In Safe Hands</p>	<p>www.fishnetwork.info</p>
<p><u>Hibbert, T: "Readiness for Children and Young People's Trusts – A Self Assessment Framework for Voluntary Youth Organisations"</u></p> <p>A form to work through to identify areas of strength & needs in your organisation.</p>	<p>National Youth Agency, 2006 written in conjunction with Yorkshire & Humber VYON</p> <p>www.nya.org</p> <p>www.youthworkunit.com</p>
<p><u>Joseph Rowntree Foundation</u></p> <p>Useful source of research papers on all kinds of social issues.</p>	<p>www.jrf.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Harris, V (ed) "The Community Work Skills Manual"</u></p>	<p>Association of Community Workers, 2001. ISBN 1-903925-01-0</p>

Sample Documents

The following documents have been offered freely by those involved in supporting voluntary sector networks.

They include:

1. A successful funding proposal for a voluntary sector network coordinator
2. A description of the role and purpose of a voluntary sector youth forum
3. A model describing how a forum and network relate to each other
4. A forums statement on membership
5. A joining form for a voluntary sector network
6. A reporting form for those attending strategic meetings
7. Part of a constitution of a VYON
8. A supervision policy and agenda
9. An accountability map
10. A job description and personnel specification for a network coordinator
11. VOX – Voluntary Youth Organisations eXchange terms of reference
12. VOX – Voluntary Youth Organisations eXchange membership structure

The hope is that you will learn from them and set up better, more effective networks which support the voluntary and community sector.

Please don't copy and use job descriptions, funding bids or constitutions without considering the needs of your local voluntary and community sector, funders and other stakeholders.

Finally, when you have developed even better systems, models and documents, be prepared to share them with others for the benefit of the wider sector.

I realise this is not so common in these days of competition for funding and market share, but cooperation and sharing of knowledge is a key principle of the community development values I believe are important in developing voluntary sector networks.



SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 1

Selection from a proposal to Connexions to continue to fund a VYON Coordinator. Not to be copied as a perfect model, by any means!

Identified issue

The Local Delivery Plan for Kirklees included provision for the continuation of the VYON (Voluntary Youth Organisation Network) Co-ordinator post.

This post will support the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the planning and delivery of Connexions services. The involvement of the voluntary and community sector in Connexions is identified in the Connexions requirements and guidance, and Connexions West Yorkshire has a strategy for involving the voluntary and community sector which includes a commitment to support and resource local VYON's.

The network of voluntary and community organisations working with young people in Kirklees is still developing but a positive start has been made. In the first year, the co-ordinator has been recruited, and awareness of the network developed. A membership system has been devised and around fifty members signed up. A diverse range of contacts across Kirklees have been recorded (over 180 on the database), and information about Connexions, funding, policy development and other news has been distributed by various methods including VYON-K Newsletters. Several local and themed events and meetings have been held, involving over fifty participants.

Work on a forum has begun, bringing together organisations working with children and young people across Kirklees. The forum will be launched in June 05, and aims to structure voluntary sector participation in service planning and policy making.

Further development of the network will improve the communication between Connexions West Yorkshire, Connexions partners and voluntary organisations, and this will help achieve some of the objectives identified in the Connexions Business Improvement and Development Plan. For example: increasing ownership of NEET targets among partners; VCS involvement in PAYP, data sharing and gaining feedback from partners.

The development of an effective network will also contribute to the work of other agencies in Kirklees – particularly the Kirklees Young People's Service and all agencies involved in the implementation of the Children Act 2004. The VYON Coordinator has participated in a number of groups and boards, bringing a perspective informed by an overview of the sector.

Proposal Description

The proposal is for one VYON Co-ordinator (0.8 FTE) to support the development of the Voluntary Youth Organisations Network.

The main aims of the role are:

- To identify and make contact with voluntary and community organisations which are working with 0-19 year olds in Kirklees, and maintain an accessible database of contact details within data protection regulations;
- To support effective communication between these voluntary organisations and Connexions West Yorkshire, and other agencies, including the groups

and structures emerging from the implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Kirklees;

- To support effective voluntary sector involvement in the planning and delivery of Connexions services, and services for children, young people and families, in Kirklees;
- To support communication, and the development of good working relationships, between voluntary organisations across Kirklees, through meetings, events, newsletters, phone, email and websites;
- To provide information and briefings to Kirklees voluntary organisations about opportunities, requirements, developments and resources relevant to their work with young people, including information about Connexions services, funding sources, training opportunities, legislation and policy developments;
- To contribute to developing the capacity of voluntary organisations to deliver quality services to young people through building links with other organisations, and the Connexions Voluntary Sector Capacity Build fund;
- To contribute directly to the strategic planning of Children's Services in Kirklees, providing a broad voluntary sector perspective.
- To develop a plan for the sustainability of the VYON Co-ordinator post and other support for the network.

Targets (by 30/6/06)

- Database to include 230 named contacts involved with voluntary youth organisations across Kirklees (currently 180);
- 75 contacts will be signed up VYON members with data protection permission to share the information they give (currently 47);
- 3 VYON newsletters distributed by post to all members, including relevant briefings in addition to email updates;
- Voluntary sector representatives at 80% Kirklees Connexions planning meetings;
- Kirklees representatives at 80% of Connexions West Yorkshire Voluntary Sector Forum meetings;
- Creation and maintenance of a VYON website and publicity material (none currently);
- Creation and maintenance of a Children's VAN (forum) website (in development);
- At least three events bringing together voluntary youth organisations working with 0-19 year olds, attended by a total of at least 50 people.
- One sustainability plan for VYON Kirklees.

Timescale

Workplans will be produced in July, October, January and April.

Newsletters will be produced as required across the year.

Meetings and events will occur throughout the year.

Membership and the database is expected to grow steadily over the year.

The sustainability plan will be completed by December 2005.
Websites and publicity developed and publicly accessible by December 2005

Delivery mechanisms

A VYON Co-ordinator will be employed to continue to develop and support a network for voluntary and community groups working with children and young people in Kirklees.

Management

The VYON co-ordinator is Tom Taylor and he will be responsible for delivery of these proposals, with some admin support (in kind contribution from VAK). Line management will be provided by Dorothea Annison, Partnership Development Manager. Financial monitoring will be carried out by Susan Thompson, Central Services Manager. She is also responsible for Health and Safety. All VAK staff are accountable to the VAK Board of Directors.

VAK is a well established local development agency for the VCS with experience of supporting partnerships between the voluntary and public sectors. The VYON co-ordinator will be part of a team of staff with responsibility for developing networks and partnerships. Regular supervision will take place.

A VAK organisation chart is attached, as are the audited accounts. VAK has suitable policies and procedures to manage this contract. These include financial procedures, health and safety policy, equal opportunities policy, data protection policy and personnel policies. Copies will be provided on request.

Costs

VYON co-ordinator (0.8 FTE + on costs)	22, 521
Office costs	3,120
Operating costs (expenses, events etc)	1,500
Management and support costs & fee	2,859
Total	30,000

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 2

Selection from the evaluation report of the Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum Jan 2004 – Oct 2005. See 'useful contacts' for details.

Purpose and role of the Forum

The Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum was established in its current form as a registered charity in 2002 in order to promote and represent the interests of the voluntary youth sector in Sunderland.

Its mission statement is:-

'To provide a coherent and consistent voice for voluntary sector youth provision in promoting, supporting and developing good practice within the sector. The Forum will act as a strong and powerful advocate for voluntary youth work. It will support voluntary youth work agencies across the City of Sunderland to provide facilities and opportunities that will advance the education, social welfare and recreational interests of young people across the City with the object of improving their conditions of life.'

It was intended that the Forum would support existing voluntary sector provision in responding to operational challenges and enable them to become more effective through the provision of guidance and support. By enabling member organisations to act co-operatively and / or collectively where appropriate the Forum has been able to promote mutual support and learning and helped the membership access opportunities for development. In representing the sector within the rapidly evolving operational environment it was anticipated that the Forum could influence future development and ensure that the sector was appropriately involved. It was envisaged that the Forum would support and nurture new organisations and provide a developmental presence in parts of the City where there was no pre-existing voluntary sector youth provision.

The Forum is now a well-established part of the voluntary sector infrastructure in the City.

The Forum represents the voluntary youth sector on several key statutory sector led bodies and agencies principally the Sunderland Connexions Service LMC, the City Council's Youth Development Group, the Education Support Team Strategic Group and the Extended Schools Strategic Partnership.

The Forum's staff have been able to take an active role in the development of operational and strategic linkages focusing on key youth related issues with a diverse range of partners including the City of Sunderland Housing Group and the Youth Offending Service.

The Forum also represents the sector on a number of voluntary sector and cross sector bodies at a citywide and regional level.

The Forum currently delivers a range of support services to member organisations including advice and support on finance and fundraising, personnel issues, programme and operational management and in relation to new developments. It provides member organisations with up to date information on policy and practice developments and ensures that information on new opportunities and challenges is communicated in a timely manner. The operation of the Forum is conducted in such a manner as to promote linkages and co-operation between agencies and provides an opportunity for project managers and other staff to gain mutual support.

The Forum co-ordinates and provides opportunities for member organisations to come together and participate in joint activities and events. Recent examples of this have been the Celebrating Asylum Event and programme, joint work with the Youth Offending Service, work with the Connexions service on the Positive Activities for Young People Programme and youth participation and consultation work.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 3

Produced by VYON Kirklees – see useful contacts for details

Models and structures

Known as	“VYON”	“The Children’s VAN”	“Links”	“The Children’s VAN Panel”
Full name	The Voluntary Youth Organisations Network	The VAN forum for Children, Young People and Families work in Kirklees	Voluntary Sector Links	The VAN Panel for Children, Young People and Families work in Kirklees
Who	Anyone working (paid or unpaid) in the voluntary sector who is involved in planning organisations work. Organisations work with and for children, young people (0-19) or families in Kirklees.	Each organisation in the sector can attend the forum (organisations work with and for children, young people (0-19) or families in Kirklees, which are not for profit, have volunteers and not managed by a statutory body).	Individuals who take on the Link role, and are recognised by the Children’s VAN as ‘Links’	Links come together to form Panel meetings
Purpose	To network voluntary organisations working with children, young people and families.	To inform and organise voluntary sector participation in the planning of children’s services.	“To participate fully in strategic meetings and decisions, raise issues relevant to those in the voluntary and community sectors, and provide a summary of key points from the meeting to others in the sector.”	To influence the strategic planning of children’s services
Elements	Membership system which produces database. Members receive newsletters, and are involved in consultations, sector analysis work etc. The database links with KINFO to produce a directory of voluntary sector organisations working with children and young people. There is a VYON e-group which facilitates email communication among members.	Meets twice a year. Meeting includes: Welcomes and information sharing; Presentation of summaries from Voluntary and Community Sector Links; Presentation of other information of interest to the sector (e.g. good practice, funding sources, policy dev’t) Open space for people to share news, introduce new workers etc. Recognising ‘Voluntary and Community Sector Links’ Networking time and food Written updates for those who cannot attend	Links should be VYON members, so that the VYON Co-ordinator is able to share their contact information with enquirers. The following groups (as a minimum) would have a Link: the Children, Young People and Families Management Board, Children’s Services Strategy Group and the VAN Steering Group. Other groups needing a Link to be decided by the forum (Children’s VAN).	The Panel will meet as required. Examples might be when a draft plan is being consulted on or major changes announced. The panel will meet to comment and feedback.
Support work done by	VYON Co-ordinator	VYON Co-ordinator and the Community Empowerment team	VYON Co-ordinator	VYON Co-ordinator
Who might fund the support work?	Connexions, Kirklees Children’s Services (hopefully)	Connexions , Kirklees Children’s Services (hopefully) Kirklees Partnership	Connexions, Kirklees Children’s Services (hopefully),	Connexions, Kirklees Children’s Services (hopefully) Kirklees Partnership

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 4

Produced by Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum – see useful contacts for details.

Membership

The Forum has two categories of membership.

The full membership consists of well established youth organisations operating on a not for profit basis. Typically they have the financial and organisational capacity to employ full time staff and have a clear focus on the provision of youth services within a locality or citywide context. They all have a track record of service delivery and many are contracted to the City Council to deliver specific youth services and hold other contracts or service level agreements with statutory agencies. Generally member organisations are constituted as independent bodies with a local management structure rather than projects based within a locality but managed and run by a large regional or national agencies. Full members have full voting rights and can generally avail themselves of the full range of services offered by the organisation.

The category of associate membership is open to agencies that have an interest in youth work but are not major providers of youth work services. They may be agencies that are at the early stages of development or smaller organisations that operate without full-time staff alternatively they may be organisations who have some interest in youth work but have a much wider community work focus. Local projects of larger Non-Governmental Organisations can access service provided by the Forum as Associate members. Associate members tend to receive support, information and advice but do not access the full range of services provided by the Forum and do not have voting rights.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 5

Produced by VYON Kirklees – see useful contacts for details

VYON JOINING FORM

Tick if
confidential

Date completed		
<i>Your name</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Anyone else to join too? (all need to sign below)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Organisation name</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Organisation type (tick all that apply)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Charity <input type="checkbox"/> Company <input type="checkbox"/> Social Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> Unincorporated Association <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Address for mail</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Organisation address (if different)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Organisation phone number(s)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Email address(es)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Preferred contact</i>	Email or Post	
<i>Web site</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Aims of Org.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional information (optional, but useful)		
<i>Other phone numbers</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Area covered</i>		
<i>Age or target group(s) to benefit</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>How many paid staff (approx total hours/wk)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Less than one full-time (or equivalent) <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 full-time <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 full time <input type="checkbox"/> 11+ full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>How many volunteers (approx)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> 1-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 40+	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Annual report enclosed?</i>	YES/NO/Don't produce one/Not available	
<i>Interested in strategy/policy etc?</i>	Yes/No/Maybe	

IMPORTANT! Please tick both boxes, and sign, only if you agree with the statements.

I agree to VYON Kirklees & Voluntary Action Kirklees using the details given above to send me information, and to share information with others in order to account for work done.

I agree to the details given above being made available to the public (except those details marked 'confidential') through a published directory and website, including Kirklees Council's KINFO service.

Signed _____ Date _____

SAMPLE DOCUMENT – 6

Produced by VYON Kirklees – see useful contacts for details

Voluntary Sector Link Report

Meeting or group name	
Date of meeting	
Where	
Chairperson	

Your name	
Date report sent	

Agenda item/topic	Notes (Focus on items of interest to the sector, include any key decisions, or deadlines for action. 400 words max. These notes will be distributed to all in the sector concerned with strategic planning.)

Please continue on extra sheets if needed, and attach.

Thank you for being a voluntary sector link for this meeting. Please send completed notes to VYON Kirklees, Voluntary Action Kirklees, 15 Lord Street, Huddersfield, HD1 1QB or email

vyon@voluntaryactionkirklees.co.uk

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 7

Produced by Wakefield VYON – see useful contacts for details

Wakefield Voluntary Youth Organisation Network (WVYON)

Aim:

To represent, support, strengthen and develop voluntary and community organisations in the Wakefield district in their work with young people.

Objectives:

- To establish WVYON as the representational body of the voluntary youth sector in Wakefield district.
- To network, share information and promote best practice and high quality work with young people.
- To represent voluntary youth organisations across the district and ensure that the voluntary sector views are heard in consultations and discussions concerning young people and service development.
- To support and develop the capacity of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of services for young people.
- To work together with statutory agencies to ensure a varied and attractive provision of youth work.
- To lobby and act collectively to build the capacity of the voluntary youth sector to influence and shape future local and regional developments effecting young people.
- To advocate with and on behalf of young people engaged with the voluntary and community sector on key matter that affect them.
- To develop policy and practice relevant to the needs of young people and the voluntary youth sector.

Membership:

Attendance of the WVYON is open to:

- Representatives from all the voluntary and community sector working predominantly with young people aged 11-19 years.
- Representatives of Regional and National Voluntary Youth Organisations working in the Wakefield District.
- Representatives invited from and nominated by statutory agencies involved with youth work in the Wakefield district.

Chair:

WVYON will elect a Chairperson who will serve for a 3 year term.

Meetings:

WVYON will hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year.

Representation:

WVYON will nominate representatives to the following:

Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation Network (2)

Young people's Service Management Board (4)

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (1)

Connexions Local Management Committee (2)

VOX

VAWD

Children's Fund

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 8

Produced by Tom Taylor. Contact tom@flow.org.uk for more details.

Supervision Policy

Purpose

There are two main purposes to supervision:

1. To support the worker by giving them a chance to talk about their work, and help them work effectively.
2. To provide an official channel for communication between the employee and the employer, to record and resolve any barriers to the worker doing their job.

Supervision system

The supervision system is outlined below.

- Each full-time worker is supervised by a member of the management committee. They meet at least every two months.
- Students, volunteers, contracted-in workers, part time and sessional workers are supervised by a full-time worker, as appropriate and as negotiated between them. This will depend on their experience, the importance of their work to the organisation and their support needs.

The aim is to value workers, improve the quality of the work done, plan future worker support and fundraising, keep management committee members informed and involved and provide an official route for serious complaints or disciplinary issues.

All supervision done by full time workers should have a written record – though the format of this can be developed by individual workers. At a minimum it should include the date, names of those involved, an agenda of issues discussed and any agreed action to be taken.

Changes to this supervision policy should be through the management team.

Recording

The Supervision Agenda is a form which aims to make sure things are not missed out in supervision.

It should be completed by the supervisor each time, and kept by them in a safe place to protect confidentiality. Only record key facts or statements (not every word said in supervision!), and agree with the worker what you will write. If there are relevant plans, diary sheets or letters, please staple them to the sheet.

Copies can be given to the worker if required.

At least once a year all the supervision notes should be reviewed by worker and supervisor to see if there are any outstanding problems or achievements.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS – 9

Produced by Tom Taylor. Contact tom@flow.org.uk for more details.

Accountability Map

The general idea is to keep accountability as clear as possible.

The network coordinator should not be accountable for their work to several different bodies – management committee, a steering group of network members, a local authority manager and a funder.

One person/group should take on the role of manager. This may be a management committee, and so include representatives of several stakeholder groups.

Mapping out where responsibilities lie, can be a helpful exercise. Do it as a list like this one, or a 'mind map' type drawing.

Funder(s)

Funder will provide funds to meet agreed objectives and targets.

Manager

Manager will supervise, support and manage the coordinator, and deal with issues relevant to their performance, including complaints.

Manager will report to the funder(s) on spending so far and progress on agreed objectives and targets.

Network Coordinator

Network coordinator will report to manager on progress on agreed objectives and targets and other work issues.

Network coordinator will inform and consult network members on priorities and plans.

Network members

Network members will communicate with the network coordinator, and each other. This will include receiving information, attending events and sharing information with others. They will raise issues with the network coordinator or the manager if necessary.

Other stakeholders

The local authority and other stakeholders will have an interest in the networks development. If they fund the network, the accountability will be through the manager.

SAMPLE DOCUMENT – 10

Produced by York Council for Voluntary Service – see useful contacts for details

Job Description (Draft)

Development Officer (Children, Young People and Families)

Job Purpose:

To develop the capacity of voluntary and community organisations working with children and young people to improve their contribution to planning mechanisms and service delivery and to help shape and deliver the Preventative Strategy across the city.

Hours: 30 hours per week

Location: York CVS, Priory Street Centre, 15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET

Responsible to: York CVS Development Officer – Health and Social Care

The approach of the Development worker will be proactive by encouraging voluntary and community organisations working with children, young people and/or families to become actively involved in new opportunities to play a bigger part in both service delivery, and in having a say in setting local policy and priorities as they relate to the Change for Children agenda and Preventative Strategy.

Main Duties

1. To map the voluntary and community sector organisations in this field, and the infrastructure services available to support them.
2. To identify gaps in provision and work with other partners to develop services to meet these needs.
3. To provide or arrange the provision of a range of support services to individual groups on topics such as governance, charitable status, fund-raising, sustainability, using volunteers, quality standards, child protection.
4. To provide or arrange the provision of, information and training on relevant policies and relevant good practice in child-care and youth work
5. To support and develop the Voluntary Forum for Children, Young People and Families and explore new mechanisms which will encourage networking and learning between individuals and groups within the sector, and between local groups and the statutory and private sectors.
6. To help different communities to organise their own networking activity or make the most of existing infrastructure provision.
7. To provide opportunities for local groups to put forward their views on national and local policies and shape the delivery of services.
8. To represent or arrange the representation of the local VCS on relevant partnership bodies.

9. To ensure the findings from the project are shared not only with voluntary and community organisations but also with joint planning bodies such as the YorOK Steering group and Board.
10. To comply with the policies of York CVS, and the contractual requirements associated with the funding of this post.
11. To work flexibly as a part of York CVS staff team
12. To be willing to work during the evenings and at weekends, as necessary.

Person Specification

This appointment will be subject to a satisfactory CRB check

The Post-holder must have:

1. A good understanding of the voluntary and community sector and the context within which it operates and at least 2 years experience of working in relevant child-care and/or youth-work settings.
2. Good knowledge of current policies and practice in working with children and young people and especially issues raised by 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' and 'Youth Matters'.
3. An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of statutory organisations in this field and experience of working in partnership with them and with other agencies.
4. Significant experience of successfully developing, managing and sustaining voluntary and community organisations and/or projects.
5. The ability to identify the training needs of VCOs and to organise learning events to help them improve their practice.
6. Excellent interpersonal and organisational skills and excellent communication skills orally and in writing.
7. A commitment to equal opportunities and diversity and to improving services for disabled children and young people.
8. Good all-round skills in information & communication technology (ICT).
9. Ability to work outside office hours as necessary.

It is desirable that the post-holder has:

1. Knowledge in the following areas: Charity Law, Legal Structures for VCOs, Volunteering, Community Development, Social Inclusion, sources of funding, and Quality Systems.
2. Some experience of producing publicity / information materials.

SAMPLE DOCUMENT – 11

'VOX – Voluntary Youth Organisations eXchange terms of reference'

VOX – Voluntary youth Organisations eXchange

Mission Statement

VOX is part of North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations. We seek to unite organisations working with young people within York and North Yorkshire and we are the key communication channel between the sector and partner agencies.

Aims

To unite and give a voice to voluntary organisations that work with and for young people.

To influence decision-makers and other agencies

To represent voluntary organisations working with young people at relevant places.

To be a focal point in York and North Yorkshire for voluntary organisations working with young people.

To facilitate communication both between voluntary organisations and other relevant organisations with whom they work.

To encourage best practice among voluntary organisations working with young people.

Objectives

Ensuring and maintaining that the network is properly represented both locally and regionally by identifying key people in those areas.

Encouraging participation in the group by promoting its aims and objectives and providing a quality service.

Encouraging, promoting and sharing examples of best practice.

Providing mutual support for member organisations, especially those with Connexions Personal Advisors.

Using a range of appropriate communication methods in order to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Facilitating regular dialogue between voluntary organisations working with young people and partner agencies.

Status

VOX is a standing committee of NYFVO and as such its Chair or Vice-chair will be a member of the Forum Board of Trustees.

Membership

Membership of VOX is open to all voluntary sector youth organisations operating in York and North Yorkshire. The Forum will maintain and update when necessary the VOX network membership list. Each member organisation will be entitled to have two dedicated representatives for the purposes of making decisions and voting etc. Where an organisation operates through 'branches' in a number of districts within the area covered by VOX they will be entitled to two representatives per branch.

Independent branches of national organisations will be regarded as separate organisations and regional officers of national voluntary youth organisations are also eligible to attend so long as they agree to VOX's Terms of Reference.

Attendance

If members fail to attend meetings without reasonable excuse new members may be sought. Substitutes or deputies are permitted if first notified to the network.

Chair

The VOX network will undertake annual elections to select a Chair and Vice-chair from its membership, each serving for a year. It will be expected that either the Chair will join the Connexions York and North Yorkshire Partnership Board of Directors, as the voluntary sector's representative, and the Vice-chair NYFVO's Board of Trustees, as the VOX network representative, or vice versa. If the person selected to represent VOX on the Forum's Board of Trustees is already a member in their own right, another member of the network will be selected to take up the position.

As a director or trustee, the Chair or Vice-chair must always act in the best interests of the organisation concerned, i.e. the Connexions Partnership or NYFVO, even though they come to that role on behalf of the voluntary youth sector. The Vice-chair will deputise for the Chair as and when necessary.

When the chair and vice-chair complete their terms of office, it will be expected that they will contribute to a smooth handover if new officers are elected.

Local Area Network

To facilitate more local work VOX will also operate at a district or borough council level and each of these 8 Local Area Groups will nominate a representative to the VOX Local Area Network. If there is more than one nomination for this role an election will be held. Meetings of the Local Area Network will be held as and when necessary.

Steering Group

The main work of VOX will be undertaken by the Steering Group, which is made up of the Chair, vice chair, the Local Area Network, other co-opted individuals from the general membership and ex-officio members from external organisations, such as local authorities, statutory agencies and support agencies. The number of co-optees will be no more than one quarter of the group. Ex-officio members will not have any voting rights in VOX elections or decision making. The Steering Group will oversee the direction and work of VOX through two sub-groups: the VOX Connexions Group and the VOX Youth Organisations Group, which will be made up of members of VOX who have an interest in the Connexions service and more general youth organisational issues respectively. Members may be on one or both of these sub-groups.

In addition the Connexions Group will advise the work of the Connexions York and North Yorkshire Voluntary and Community Sector Network Development Worker and support the work of the voluntary sector representative at the Connexions Board. Likewise, the Youth Organisations Group will advise the work of the North Yorkshire Forum's Youth Organisations Development Officer and will support the work of the VOX representative on the Forum's Board of Trustees.

Servicing

NYFVO staff will attend and service meetings, and facilitate the work of the network.

Meetings

There will be at least three meetings of the Steering Group each year, in a venue agreed by the members. The VOX Connexions Group will meet roughly every 6 – 8 weeks. The Youth Organisations Group will meet at least quarterly.

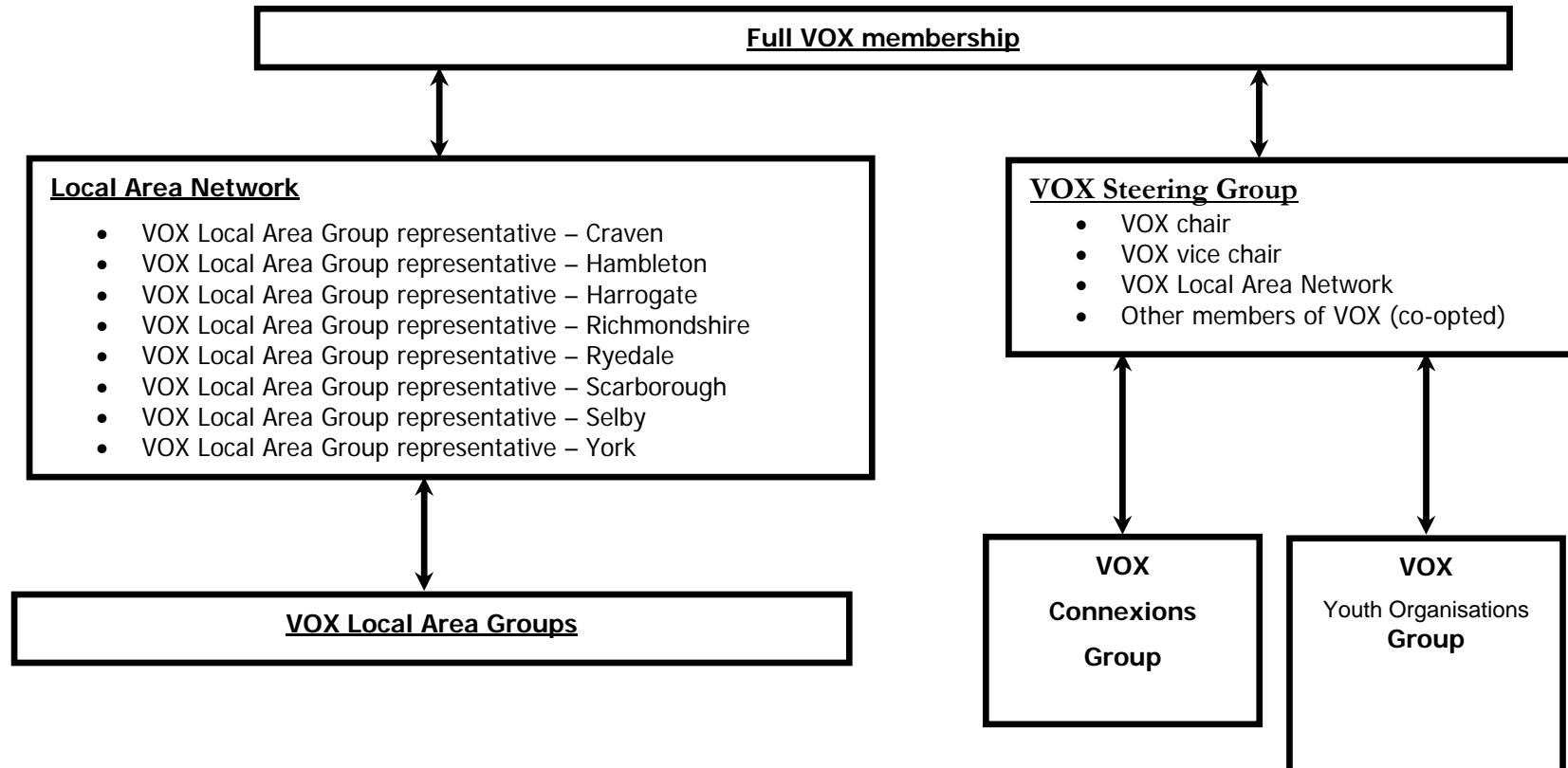
Annual Report

VOX will contribute to NYFVO's Annual Report detailing work undertaken as well as achievements.

June 2004

SAMPLE DOCUMENT – 12

'VOX – Voluntary Youth Organisations eXchange membership structure'



Roles and Responsibilities

Chair: Prime representative of VOX, member of Connexions York and North Yorkshire's Board of Directors or NYFVO Board of Trustees .

Vice – chair: Chair's deputy, member of NYFVO Board of Trustees or Connexions York and North Yorkshire's Board of Directors .

Local Area Network: Representatives facilitate regular meetings of VOX Local Area Groups; conduit between VOX centrally and VOX locally.

VOX Steering Group: Meets three times a year to discuss overall progress of VOX, the work locally and centrally, and future work.

VOX Local Area Groups: To facilitate local networking, peer support, consultation, communication, feedback and representation.

VOX Connexions Group: Those members of the VOX network concerned with Connexions Y&NY issues; advises work of Connexions VCS worker.

VOX Youth Organisations Group: Those members of VOX concerned with general youth organisational issues e.g. Transforming Youth Work; advises the work of NYFVO's Youth Organisations Development Officer.

(Note: members of the VOX Connexions Group may also be members of the VOX Youth Organisations Group).

