

Name of meeting/event	Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA) Fairness and Funding Opportunities
Date & time of meeting	Tuesday 17 November, 10am- 1pm
Organised by	Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)
Chairman/Facilitator	Steve Phaure, CEO, CVA
Minute taker	Sarah Burns, Head of Communities (shared), CVA
Venue	CVA Resource Centre, 82 London Road. CR0 2TB

Attendance: Please see attached document for the full list of attendees:

#croydonVA #CVSA

Steve Phaure welcomed and introduced the meeting. The Opportunities and Fairness Commission's Interim Report has the theme of equalities throughout and supports a pronounced role for our voluntary sector.

The Opportunities & Fairness Commission (OFC) Interim Report

Cllr Hamida Ali, OFC Vice-Chair, The Opportunities and Fairness Commission was set up 8 months ago by the Labour Council, inspired by Islington tackling entrenched inequalities. There are 13 members of the commission, Chaired by The Bishop of Croydon. There has been criticism that the Interim Report is vague and nonspecific but that was deliberate and now we need support to develop and fine tune the recommendations to be realistic and achievable. The commission has listened to over 3000 people, more than any other commission has achieved. We have sought to listen to those that are seldom heard and engaged with over 100 organisations. It's about opportunity and life chances for all. Through sharing experience and expertise the commission wants to boost volunteering and tap into the vast resource within our communities through 'informal volunteering', those who wouldn't identify as volunteers. Key themes identified within the report include:

The Town Centre, we need a whole borough approach. The Council is a living wage employer and we need to encourage this to be adopted across the borough.

No child left behind, with a focus on school exclusions, life chances, bullying and role models.

Social Isolation, the commission is looking at social prescribing models and how to boost volunteering opportunities.

Homelessness, Eviction from private/rented sector is the primary cause of homelessness, in the past it was due to family disputes. The council needs to use it's leverage to help at the point of crisis and draw on the CAB research, e.g. 9 out of 10 landlords won't take Housing Benefit.

Living Standards, Croydon has high rates of employment support yet lower than London Living Wage. Islington has a model of employment support in GP surgeries that the commission is interested in. There is also a First Step campaign to offer every young person good work experience placements.

Next Steps:

The commission needs to be evidence led and is keen to hear from everyone. The consultation will continue until the end of the month, the current report is the 'interim' report and the final report will be published at the end of January 2016.

For the full presentation see the following link: <http://www.cvalive.org.uk/news/cvsa-previous-meetings/>

Q&A

Q Christian Wilcox, Mental Health & Wellbeing Forum, Concerned about Government pushing mental health service users into work and showing no patience with regards to their recovery. Urge the Commission not to make the same mistake and push people recovering from mental health issues too hard as long term it will be detrimental to their health and consequently their employment capability.

Q Tony Sewell, Moving into Positive Change and Croydon Night Watch, 80% of landlords do not take Housing Benefit. Is the council going to have some kind of rent guarantee?

Q Darren Pullman, Croydon Mediation, How many copies have you printed of the interim report? Who's going to read the report? What did it cost?

Q Stephen Aselford, Disability Croydon, We need to encourage employers to employ disabled people. The number of unemployed disabled people who cannot get a job is escalating.

Q Keith Bill, Croydon Vision, Is the Interim Report printed in large print and Braille?

A On Welfare Reform, the points both Christian and Stephen make are understood. We are keen to encourage those who want to get back into work and enable disabled people to be employed at all levels. With regards to Housing Benefit, the council can operate as an intermediary. We need more solutions to good quality housing. With the plans to change the benefit system to a single benefit payment 'Universal Credit' we are planning for that change. The Council has just introduced a licensing scheme as 1 in 5 properties fall below the housing standards.

The Interim Reports have been circulated digitally with 500 hard copies distributed to libraries. As Ambassadors we call on CVSA members to invite others to read the report. Not sure how much it cost so I will follow up on this outside of this meeting. In terms of accessibility, there is a text version online. If other ways are needed then please let the Commission know.

Q Caroline Mack, Citizen's Advice Croydon, Volunteers are a great resource but they need to be managed so aren't 'free'.

Q Charlie Ladyman, Healthwatch, Have you any examples of the outcomes that Islington has achieved?

Q Iliana, Family Space, Can the council work with employers around flexible working to support parents?

Q Patrick Marples, SW London Law Centre, Why isn't there anything on advice with regards to Social Welfare Law and Legal Aid within the report?

Q Miriam, Keeping a child out of school doesn't help them. What are the options around excluding?

A Absolutely, volunteers need to be managed and there are costs involved. The first outcome achieved by the O&F Commission in Islington was that they established a London Living Wage in 2010 and they were the first borough to set up Citizen Advice. Islington established an Education Maintenance Allowance and introduced a focus on health inequalities but that proved to be more difficult to tackle.

In response to Family Space, childcare did come up as a strong issue during the initial engagement exercise. The commission supports 'becoming a flexible working borough' to be able to get more out of employees but have not got a clear solution on how to make that happen so please email your suggestions. In response to the Law Centre, the report doesn't include specifics on advice so we'd encourage you to submit a short statement of what's needed in practical terms. On exclusion, prevention is at the heart of our work and we're keen to ensure, where possible, the child is kept in school and behavioural needs are addressed.

Q Lisa Taylor, Carers Hub, Disabled services are separate for young people and adults, often services just stop when a young person reaches adulthood. There needs to be a smooth transition as gaps in services can cause an enormous amount of stress.

Q Margret Animeka, Raising Aspirations, With regards to the Westfield development, what training and support will be provided for NEETS and what efforts are being made to reduce social exclusion?

Q Ricardo Bhola, STB Foundation, Schools should engage more effectively with the community. Have the commission connected with schools?

Q Keith Minear, Garworth Foundation, Welcome the commitment to the London Living Wage there's the obvious question on costs as regards to current and future contracts?

Q Harriet Butler, Home Start Croydon, There are voluntary organisations in Croydon that already go into family homes and help with social isolation and cover the 3 areas the committee prioritises yet there is no mention of them in the Interim Report. Flexible working was discussed at the Child Poverty Group.

Q Lorraine Chatfield, Heathfield Ecology Centre, Don't like the plan that other services such as the Job Centre will operate out of GP surgeries.

A Cllr Andrew Rendle is our Autism Champion and made the same point on lack of joined up services, thanks for the feedback. Stronger approach needed to support young people to get jobs, possible academy? Croydon needs to put push Westfield on what we expect them to give back. Need to be specific, for example; 1 in 3 interviews should be offered to a local person. In response to Ricardo, the commission wants to take an 'asset' approach rather than list problems and view

schools as assets that make useful recommendations. We have a Youth Commission that mirrors the O&F Commission to gain the views of young people and they'll be presenting back to us on the interim report. On the question from Garwood Foundation, every future contract with the council will stipulate the need to pay the London Living Wage.

The commission was set up by this Labour administration and implementation was received by Cabinet yesterday. We have existing structures in place through Local Strategic Partnerships and through the commission can make suggestions about how to implement change. The commission recognises that lots of organisations and individuals are already delivering on the identified priority areas. The commission would like to capture this information and identify what can be built on. We've used illustrative examples but they are not exhaustive of what's happening in the borough. The commission is not statutory or grant making but the report provides an opportunity to show what we all value.

Q Who is it that funds the commission? Is it just ideas or is it going to make a difference in the borough?

Q Brian Longman, CVA, CNCA & O&F Commissioner, Through the interim report we are asking who can help play a part in achieving the vision. We want organisations to identify relevant groups of people who can lead on different aspects. It is ambitious as it's trying to bridge the gap between recommendations and implementation.

Q Estella Stuckey, Youth O&FC, The interim report brings together what we've heard and who else is working towards the same goals.

A In response to concerns about other services operating out of GP surgeries, it's about going to where people are.

Lorraine Chatfield- I remain unconvinced by that plan.

Steve Phaure- The commission are asking for your feedback so take them up on it, either through your own organisations or as a co-ordinated voluntary sector response through CVSA.

Stronger Communities: Commissioning Principles

Sarah Ireland, LBC Director of Strategy, Communities and Commissioning

This presentation follows on from the discussions at the CVSA meeting in July. The complexity of demands is increasing in Croydon and we don't receive a fair share of funding so there are considerable challenges for us to overcome. The new commissioning framework will help to achieve the 'Ambitious for Croydon' vision. For the full presentation see the following link: <http://www.cvalive.org.uk/news/cvsa-previous-meetings/>

Breakout session:

Q1: What are the potential barriers that the new commissioning principles could create for the voluntary and community sector? How could we overcome these issues?

Q2: What are the opportunities this presents for the voluntary and community sector? How can we work together to maximise the benefits?

For the write up from the breakout session follow this link:

New Outcomes Funding Programme

Cllr Mark Watson, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety & Justice.

At present, Croydon Council has a number of funding programmes supporting a wide range of activities and services in the Voluntary Sector.

Croydon Council is now bringing all these programmes together into one, focussing on the key outcomes for the borough and influenced by the findings and detailed research of the independent Opportunity & Fairness Commission; they will therefore be moving away from their current funding model, which is more directed to service areas rather than outcomes.

The new programme will be cross cutting with:

- An approach that builds on the assets of the VCS, promoting enterprise and social value. It will seek to remove barriers and promote diversity in the sector, allowing new approaches, particularly the grass roots community responses to issues.
- The aim to create a broad range of opportunities for different forms of volunteering from all parts of borough, from all volunteering organisations.
- High standards of accountability, transparency and best use of resources with success being measured on changing outcomes for our residents

Q&A

Q Tony Sales, Old Coulsdon Centre for the Retired: Is the Over 65 commissioning opportunity mentioned in Sarah's presentation included in this?

A No, it is separate. Details of the Over 65 commissioning opportunity are not available at present.

Q Sara Milocco, from Croydon Voluntary Action: It would be useful to remind us of what funding streams are being merged into this new funding programme.

A These include the Stronger Communities, Youth Localities, Carers Network and Preventative Services programmes.

Business items

VCS Strategy / Stronger Communities Partnership

LSP Elections CVSA holds elections every 2 years to democratically select VCS representatives onto Croydon's key strategic partnerships. CVSA elections are underway and we're keen to hear from anyone late nominations, voting to commence shortly. There are a range of subgroups and partnerships members can put themselves forward: from Sexual Health & HIV to Mental Health, from Maternity Services to Health & Well Being. Participants were invited to approach Sara Milocco, if interested, at the end of the meeting.

Next meeting: CVSA is organising a specific workshop on the upcoming Best Start commissioning opportunity (services for families with children aged under 5 years) in the next couple of weeks. A date will be circulated soon.