

CIO 1156302

**Volunteer Centre West Berkshire is the council for voluntary service for West Berkshire.**

**This short report is intended to provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with a glimpse of the activities that the Volunteer Centre is undertaking in order to ensure that the voice of the voluntary sector is heard within the statutory bodies.**

The charity provides a range of services to the third sector and liaises with the statutory partners to include the principal and town and parish councils. In addition VCWB is a founding steering group member for the BOB ICB Voluntary Sector Alliance.

VCWB provides training, advocacy, governance advice, funding advice, partnerships advice, volunteer recruitment and information and networking events such as The Knowledge Event and V365 recruitment fairs and a weekly Voluntary Sector Bulletin reaching 950 people in the sector each week.

VCWB organises and clerks the following specialist voluntary sector voice forums. VCWB supports each chair, minutes the meetings and liaises with appropriate statutory sector officers.

**Children and Young People Voice** chaired by Rosemary Lilley comprising of the following groups

Dingley's Promise , Recovery in Mind ,WB Mencap ,Hungerford youth club ,Time to Talk  
Home Start WB , Watermill Theatre ,PALS ,Get Berkshire Active, Jesus disciples  
VoxThrive, Berkshire Youth ,ABC to Read, Daisys Dream ,Mind in Berkshire  
PACT, Thatcham Youth, Berkshire Women's Aid, Swings and Smiles  
Bridge for Young People (Previously Young People and Children First)

**Example of current issue** Challenges with retaining volunteers issue raised at last meeting

**Special Educational Needs Voice** chaired by Rhonda Nicklin comprising of the following groups

The Advocacy People, Dingley's Promise, Autism Berkshire ,Thrive ,Berkshire Vision  
WB Mencap, Parenting special children, Reading FC, SENDIASS (Rose Road)  
Watermill Theatre, PALS, ASD Family Help , Lambourn RDA ,WB Therapy Centre  
Good Hope Farm, VoxThrive, Mary Hare, West Berks PDA Support Group  
Happiness Horse Box, Swings and Smiles, Wholestep CIC, HealthWatch WB, Interakt

**Example of issue raised** Insufficient funding and educational needs support from the LA, less specialist spaces, less money and more diagnosed young people

**Sports Voice** chaired by John Bolam

Phoenix Lacrosse, Kennet Basketball ,Street Games ,Thatcham Rugby Club,  
Newbury Canoe Club, Newbury Parkrun ,Newbury Road Club ,Sport in Mind  
Thatcham Town Cricket Club, TVK Wheelchair Basketball Newbury and Thatcham Hockey Club  
Educafe, Newbury Judo Club ,NCRC ,Get Berkshire Active ,Thames Valley Amateur Boxing Club  
Reading FC Community Trust, CSA 07 Football Club ,WB Run Together  
West Berkshire Muslim Centre

**Example of current issues** Lack of available sports pitches / venues across district and spaces to allow for club growth.

**Arts For Well Being Voice** chaired by Tom Broadfoot comprising of the following groups

Ace Space, Eight Bells, The Watermill Theatre, City Arts Newbury, Living Paintings  
The Corn Exchange, Burble Design, Arlington Arts, The Arts Society Newbury  
The Art of Giving CIC, Newbury and District Arts Association, Newbury Art Group  
VoxThrive, Speen Community Café, Newbury Nomads, Wholestep CIC  
Creative Communities, Starting Point, Interakt Community, Arts for Hungerford  
Newbury Youth Theatre

**Example of current issue** Funding to encourage participation in the arts for well-being and finding venues which are affordable. WBC needs an arts officer as it used to have.

**Suicide Prevention Action Group** chaired by Garry Poulson a stakeholder group comprising of VCWB, Newbury Samaritans, Racing Welfare, WBC Public Health, Thames Valley Police, elected members, GAMCARE, Healthwatch,

BHFT, West Berkshire Action for Refugees, Soup Kitchen, WBC Schools Wellbeing coordinator.

**Current Issues** now establishing a peer support group for survivors of those bereaved by suicide.

**Community Transport Forum** chaired by Garry Poulson comprising of the following groups

Thatcham Volunteer Group, Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre, Lambourn Volunteer Group, The Standby Group (Bradfield), Kintbury Volunteer group, Hungerford CHAIN. Downland Volunteer Group, Burghfield and Mortimer Handybus, Burghfield and Mortimer Volunteer Bureau, Theale Care Bus, Chapel Row Community Service Group. Newbury Community Car Service.

**Current Challenges** Volunteer Driver mileage rates currently set in 2011 are now significantly behind costs. The limit is having an effect on volunteer driver recruitment. A campaign amongst the groups lead by VCWB and the national community transport association is ongoing. The local MP has been forwarding our letters to the treasury but the treasury is not flexing on this important issue.

### **Poverty and Cost of Living HUB**

The sector is facing a number challenges at this time. As might be expected the poverty and cost of living crisis affecting West Berkshire is being met by a range of excellent charities who are dealing each day with grass roots issues e.g food provision for families and individuals, homelessness, poverty. White Goods, furniture and effects. In February 2023 VCWB established the Hub at the request of WBC Public Protection Lead. The HUB meetings have now been well established with a very healthy number of attendees. The resulting meetings have contributed to the establishment of a cost of living fund provided by WBC and Greenham Trust. The fund being circa 140k. This fund is available to West Berks charities to bid into for projects that meet the needs of the communities and individuals being effected by poverty and the cost of living.

**VCWB shall be preparing an update for each HWB with a focus on particular issues that partners may be able to address or assist with.**