



Slough Community Network

Slough Community Network

*Including Community Care Forum and
Children and Young Peoples Forum*

The Big Society - What does it mean for you?

SCN REPORT: November 2010



NHS
Berkshire East

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Introduction

Eleanor Cryer, Slough CVS's Chairman welcomed exactly 91 delegates to 'The Big Society – What does it mean for you?' event. The day was run by Slough Community Network including the Community Care Forum and the Children and Young Peoples Forum. The attendees represented a cross section of people from the community and voluntary sector as well as representatives from all the main statutory bodies.

The aim of the day was to find out more about what the Big Society means to Slough and what we, the residents and workers of the town, all understand by it. To this end we were delighted to welcome Ruth Bagley, Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council to get the local authority's perspective on the Big Society.

Further presentations were made by Jo Courtenay from Age Concern Slough and Berkshire East on 'Personalisation – Learning experience of Brokerage and by Rob Wood from Slough Borough Council on 'Information on Census'..

A new Community Champion was nominated thus Colin Young from the YMCA become the champion for 'Increased support from education and youth services for Slough groups'.

Slough Quality Protects Awards were distributed to those deserving winners and the day concluded with discussion within the various workgroups on the Big Society and what it means for the town.

This report will endeavour to bring together the various threads of the day. Copies of this report containing all the issues raised and the questions that need answering will be forwarded to Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE) as well as all the statutory bodies present at the event.

Summary

The Table-top groups identified the following issues:

“Learning to work together takes time. And we need stability of funding to allow groups to plan ahead and avoid working in isolation and produce stronger, happier communities that are sustainable.”

“Big Society – what would we like it to mean? More community cohesion i.e. helping neighbours, elderly family etc.. Community should be nothing to do with cash.”

“Despite the willingness to work together on the Big Society it does appear to be more work for less funding. This does not empower effective cohesion.”

“Where are the volunteers coming from? We need to value people. We need case studies or examples of how the Big Society has worked elsewhere.”

“Many groups in Slough are very good at multi-agency working i.e. the Big Society has been in existence for ages in Slough with some groups working openly with partners.”

“We’ve relied too heavily on government. Dependency has broken society. Communities need to be rebuilt.”

“Greater understanding of need of local communities by local business and government e.g. work experience for the disabled.”

“One rather telling remark was the offer to David Cameron from a delegate to come and work with him for a day. Another was David Cameron should start at the coal face not at the top of the mountain.”

Cont. overleaf

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Summary cont.

“Will all this community spirit and working together with less resources give us any more influence over decision makers as well as recognition. We need more influence on where the money goes. Where’s the money for the Big Society coming from? What does ‘we will find ways to help you help yourself’ actually mean?”

“ We need to continue to support neighbourhood working and to speak up for those small groups who are loosing out by the new set up. How shall small groups cope if they are too small to bid for commissioned services and are unable to collaborate with larger organisations? They still do valuable work for the most disadvantaged. Will the big charities take it all? “

Conclusions

It was apparent from the Table Top discussions that there is much confusion and little knowledge about what the Big Society means to individuals, community groups and the town itself.

The most commonly heard question from the delegates was ‘What’s next?’

More guidance and clarity from Central Government

Funding for basic core costs

Less speakers and a smaller agenda.

Recommendations

The Report to be widely distributed to the relevant statutory bodies and RAISE so that our views are taken forward.

All present would have liked to have more time to hear from Ruth Bagley, Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council and to have her attend further community events such as Slough Community Network..

Who was there and what they said

Aik Saath
African Family Development Support Group
Arbour Vale School
Art Beyond Belief
Berkshire Somali Community
Bracknell CAB
Britwell Y & C Centre
Cippenham Federation of Tenants and Residents Association
Dis:Course The Ark Studio
disAbility Matters
Duke of Edinburgh's Award
East Berkshire Education Business Partnership (EBeBP)
Family Action
Golden Eagles Football Club
Inspirations
LINKS
Manor Park Community Forum
Mencap
Padstones
People 1st Slough
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
SBC
SCT & Shopmobility
SCVS
SEEDS Trust
Shelter
Shopmobility
Slough Equalities Commission
Slough Federation
Slough Furniture Project
Slough Museum
Slough Older People's Forum
Slough Rugby Football Club
Slough Senior Citizens Group
Special Voices
SPELT UK
Thames Valley Police

Thames Valley Positive Support
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
The Parvaaz Project
Thomas Gray Centre
United Voices
Voice of the Child
Volunteer Centre Slough
Windsor and Maidenhead Executive Job Club

Examples of comments

"Individual budgets, I understand it better now"

"More time for questions with Ruth"

"Managing questions in advance"

"It would have been good to hear some snippets of guidance re Big Society, rather than say "the government doesn't know"

"Workgroup format was interesting"

"Census talk, short and to the point"



The Big Society - Ruth Bagley

Ruth Bagley, Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council spoke about The Big Society. Volunteering is central to The Big Society as is working together with the Council and other voluntary organisations to improve our community. She identified the various strengths and weaknesses that we face in Slough but also the opportunities.

The strengths included a good tradition of people playing their part in the third sector and good established relationships and partnerships between the public and third sector.

Potential weaknesses included the fragmentation of organisational capacity due to the increasingly diverse population of Slough, the fact that there is a smaller cohort of people able to commit to volunteer to be on boards or to help charities to bid for money because they already have too much responsibility. Volunteering also tends to be in areas where people have an interest, such as sports so it is more difficult to get people to work in areas of need.

The main potential threat was the possibility of the different sectors or just the voluntary sector fighting between ourselves. Capacity may also be more limited.

She also stressed the opportunities. Slough is moving more towards a commissioning culture and away from grant funding so finding out how your project fits into solving the town's bigger problems, such as tackling obesity and reducing anti-social behaviour will be really important.

Groups could work together to share resources, taking away some overheads such as accommodation. Slough has a large business community and it is willing to put in different sources of support to enable the voluntary sector to become more sustainable.

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They can also help with marketing, finance and HR information/support. There needs to be a recognition that the public sector cannot maintain the existing level of funding. There will be a 25% cut over 4 years. Barriers between organisations in the vol sector need to be broken down and there is a need to work together for the good of the community, enabling people to cope for themselves and be less reliant on the Council. There is also a need to grow capacity for the voluntary sector to enable it to bid elsewhere.

She concluded that Slough has a great tradition of people playing their part in the voluntary sector and that we do have good relationships between the sectors.

Questions and Answers

John Spanley: Will the Council be supporting sport in Slough in the future? There have already been significant cuts.

Ruth: Groups will need to show how delivering sports activities will fit into reducing the bigger problems in Slough such as reducing anti-social behaviour, obesity etc. Government have asked Council to reduce spending on sport so they have had to remove certain activities. Slough Borough Council has chosen to continue with some such as free swimming for children and older people.

Q: Why are you making all these changes when you don't have the full picture yet?

Ruth: After attending various events and heard different interpretations, the government are saying that this is the big idea, we want you to make the most of it – they are leaving it to local interpretation.

Vijay Gupta: What services will be affected most by the 25% cuts?

Ruth: SBC needs to save a further £6.9million p/a. The net expenditure is currently £104 million p/a. Council has already been making cuts/savings through accommodation, debt collection, using capital money in order that the public do not notice a significant change to services. SBC have already made a saving to the library service which has not only saved money but enhanced the service. They have teamed up with another council to share management costs and overheads. The council can only identify immediate cuts at the moment, this may change over the next 4 years.

Rani: Query over library service for older people

Ruth: To find out answer

Personalisation - Learning experience of brokerage

Jo Courtenay, Director of Community Development, Age Concern Slough and Berkshire East gave a presentation on Personalisation - Learning experience of brokerage along with Tracy Cartmell, Lead on Personalisation, Slough Borough Council.

Questions and Answers

Glynys Higgins, Foxborough Tenants and Residents Association:

How do people know what services there are out there to choose from?

Jo: Age Concern has produced a list known as Marketplace which has identified services and will be updated.

Tracy: A service directory will be produced by Slough Borough Council early next year.

Warren Feagins, Slough CVS: What's the time limit for accessing this amount of people?

Tracy: There are 3500 service users. There will be workers who will have a target workgroup. The target is 30% (1265 people) to be put on Personal Budget Plans by April 2011. By April 2012 all service users to be put on Personal Budget Plans.

Neeru Palhi, Parvaaz: Who will manage the brokerage service for younger people?

A: Slough Borough Council

A: Eleanor: Slough Mencap have been running a brokerage service for people with learning difficulties for a number of years now

Q: Will Personal Assistants be an option included in the Personal Budget Plans?

Jo: Yes they are. Age Concern have been working with providers to employ Personal Assistants and this has run smoothly over the trial period. It is hoped that these agencies will vet the PA's and make sure they are suitable for the client's needs.

Q: If people are not happy with the service, can they go back to Slough Borough Council?

A: Yes, their managed budget will be picked up by Slough Borough Council.

Information on Census

Rob Wood, Slough Borough Council gave a presentation about the Census. Here are some key facts.



Facts

- The next census will take place on 27 March 2011.
- You will get a 2011 Census questionnaire in the post for you and other members of your household to complete.
- It will ask all kinds of questions - about living accommodation, work, nationality, ethnic background, marital status, babies, children, students, older people, people with disabilities, and more.
- By doing the census, you will be able to help shape the kind of communities and services you and the people around you need.
- Everything you tell the census will be in complete confidence.
- Government uses census population estimates to work out how much money to give each local authority to spend on public services.
- Local authorities use them to work out what kind of services they need to provide for people – schools, hospitals, childcare, community care, transport and more.
- To find out more about the what, when, why and how of the 2011 Census, visit www.census.gov.uk

Slough Quality Protects Awards



At the Slough Community Network event ten groups received awards, ranging from Bronze to Platinum, from Sheila Cuell, Slough CVS committee member and producer of Slough Quality Protects.



Volunteer Centre Slough receive Platinum award



Jeena receive Bronze award



Means of Survival receive Gold award



YMCA receive Gold award



Resource Productions receive Gold award



Slough Community Transport and Shopmobility receive Platinum award



Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid receive Platinum award



The Cultural Centre receive Bronze award



Future Foundation receive Bronze award



Slough Mencap receive Platinum award

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Simple Quality Protects (SQP) is a simple, effective assurance programme that all organisations should have in place when delivering services to members of the community. The programme is simple, effective and has real examples of good practice that all organisations should have in place.

Sian Smith, CYP Health Improvement Manager, Slough Borough Council emphasised the importance of attaining a SQP award:

“Slough Quality Protects has provided the Local Authority with a measure to ensure quality services for the people of Slough. Using this tool also supports voluntary and community groups to shape their services effectively to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our society.”

Community Champions



Above: Colin Young
Right top: Eleanor Cryer
Right middle: Wendy Field
Right bottom: Vijay Gupta



The Community Champions at the event gave their feedback from their work over the year.



Slough Community Network had one vacancy to fill, **Increase support from education and youth services for Slough groups**. The Network elected a new Community Champion, Colin Young from the YMCA.



Appendix 1

Although there were 91 delegates at the event evaluations were only completed for 57 for gender and age and 43 for ethnicity.

Gender of Delegates	Amount	Percentage
Female	35	61%
Male	22	39%

Age of delegates	Amount	Percentage
20-31	6	11%
31-40	11	19%
41-50	16	28%
51-60	13	23%
61-70	7	12%
71-80	3	5%
81 +	1	2%

Ethnicity of Delegates	Amount	Percentage
Asian	5	12%
British Afro-Caribbean	0	0%
British Indian	3	7%
British Pakistani	3	7%
White other	1	2%
White British	22	52%
White Irish	3	7%
White Gypsy/Roma Traveller	0	0%
Mixed Black Caribbean	1	2%
Mixed Black/African	0	0%
Mixed White/Asian	2	5%
Black African	1	2%
Black Afro/Caribbean	1	2%
Chinese	0	0%
Mixed other	1	2%



Photographs from the day



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Thanks to all those who participated on the day and contributed to this report.

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