

## Background

The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 sets out a strategy to work with Voluntary and Community Organisations over the next ten years. The focus is on supporting the environment for a healthy Voluntary and Community Sector, enabling voice and campaigning, strengthening communities and transforming public services. This is reflected in programmes being rolled out at a local level through the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Strategy, which include specific targets such as increasing voluntary and community sector activity (including community participation) by 5% by 2013 and increasing the number of people from all sections of the community involved in volunteering.



Hastings Voluntary Action

# The state of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Hastings

2007/08

Hastings Voluntary Action

## The importance of profiling the Voluntary and Community Sector

To assist with meeting and measuring progress against these targets we need to be able to provide authoritative information about what local voluntary and community organisations are doing, how they are meeting the needs of local people and communities, whether they have the capacity to provide more and better services and activities and whether they provide value for money. This in turn enables us to promote the role of the sector in building stronger communities and contributing to the social and economic regeneration of Hastings both in terms of services provided and the people involved as paid workers, volunteers and community activists. This helps local authorities and other partners to increase their understanding of the contribution made by the voluntary and community sector and guides more members of the public so that they can get involved as volunteers, give money, apply for jobs, engage in activities, use services and influence local decision making processes.

Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) has been developing its systems for profiling the local voluntary and community sector through its membership base over recent years. This has included looking at the sector's composition, activities, resources, strengths, weaknesses and support/development needs. This has largely been to help us to do our job more professionally and to greater effect. Many people will be aware of the local directory of voluntary and community groups which HVA updates and produces on an annual basis. The following gives an analysis of some of the additional information we have been gathering to establish a 'baseline' to help measure progress against the Community Strategy and LAA targets detailed above. This will also be significant in terms of the current development of the Hastings and Bexhill Economic Alliance's Economic Development and Inclusion Strategy.

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## The Voluntary and Community Sector in Hastings as local employers

A sample survey of 204 HVA members in 2007/8 reported a total of 625 paid full time jobs and a further 420 paid part-time jobs within the local sector. On top of this a total of 4078 volunteers are also employed representing a total of 9578 volunteer hours per week. Based on a 37 hour week over a full year the 'added value' of volunteer time would represent a total of an additional 259 full time jobs, which based on the 2006 average weekly earnings in Hastings £415 (East Sussex in Figures), makes a contribution valued at £5,589,220.

A similar study conducted by HVA in 2002 on a less 'scientific' basis but based on the same response rate indicated that there were around 505 paid full time jobs, 437 paid part-time jobs and 2298 volunteers working 7124 hours per week. The 'added value' of volunteer time at this time based on today's average earnings represented the equivalent of 192 full time jobs valued at £4,143,360.

## The Voluntary and Community Sector in Hastings as service providers and 'community engagers'

The voluntary and community sector in Hastings as demonstrated through HVA's membership is dynamic, diverse and complex, and ranges from the very smallest of neighbourhood and self-help groups operating on a shoe-string to much larger organisations employing paid staff with robust finances. Much of this work underpins key public services such as health and social services, but it would be a mistake to think of the sector only in this context. In fact, the voluntary and community sector in Hastings covers many types of groups including those that deal with the environment, sports, child care, faith groups, disability, arts and education, and that's not forgetting the work that gets done on the multitude of decision-making committees and consultative groups that keep people actively involved in their communities and engaged in democratic processes.

The table below gives a breakdown of the types of activity covered by the sample survey of 204 HVA members.

Activity	Members
Advice information and advocacy	18
Health and social welfare	20
Children, young people and families	27
Community forums/residents associations	18
Arts, sports and leisure	17
Physical, sensory and learning disability	18
Learning and employment	13
Community safety and transport	7
Housing and environment	21
Older People and carers	13
Faith groups	13
BME groups, asylum seekers and refugees	6
Community development and voluntary sector support	9
Gender and sexual orientation	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>

The table below compares the income levels of members surveyed in 2007/8 and 2002. As all organisations surveyed are 'not for profit' the income levels give a good indication of annual turnover.

2002		2007/08	
Less than £10,000	53%	Less than £20,000	41%
£10,000–£100,000	27%	£20,000–£100,000	30%
£100,000–£250,000	13%	£100,000–£250,000	9%
Over £250,000	7%	Over £250,000	11%
		No information	9%

Although these figures cannot be directly compared due to differences in the bandings used, they do give some indication of the size of voluntary and community groups and the range of those managing on a shoestring to those managing on large scale resources.

Taking the median point in each of the bandings up to a maximum of £250,000 we can also say that the 204 voluntary and community organisations surveyed are currently delivering services and activity within the locality to the estimated value of £12,889,750 matched by the contribution of volunteers at £5,589,220 compared with £11,199,510 matched by £4,143,360 in 2002.

## Establishing a base-line

It is important to recognise that the above figures are based on a sample survey of 204 voluntary and community groups. It is also worth noting that 10% of members surveyed work across the Hastings and Rother district/borough boundaries.

Recent research by RAISE, *Hidden Asset – a report to demonstrate the value of the voluntary/community sector in the South East*, (April 2005), estimates that there are approximately four voluntary and community organisations per 1,000 population.

For Hastings, with a population of around 86,000 this would suggest that there are approximately 344 voluntary and community groups in the Town. For HVA this would appear to be a realistic estimation given the numbers of groups worked with during the course of a year and would suggest a 68% increase on the above figures to give a more accurate picture of the scale of activity.

The table below compares key data between 2002 and 2007/08 using the four voluntary / community groups per 1000 population 'rule of thumb'.

	2002	2007/08
Full time Jobs	848	1,050
Part time Jobs	734	706
Volunteers	3,860	6,851
Volunteer hours per week	11,968	16,091
Full time equivalent jobs	323	435
Annual income/turnover	£18,815,177	£21,654,780
'Added value' of volunteer time	£6,970,340	£9,387,300

The 6,851 volunteers estimated in the latest figures represents approximately 1 in 12 residents, however these figures only include individuals volunteering in voluntary and community groups and not the public sector e.g. as school governors, police volunteers etc. The figures also indicate that volunteers are working an average of 2.3 hours per week.

Figures taken from East Sussex in Figures would suggest that there are around 30,000 paid jobs in Hastings. Based on the analysis above this would mean that the 1,756 paid jobs within the voluntary and community sector represents about 6% of all paid employment in the Town. With the added value of voluntary work this increases to 7%.

## Supporting sector growth

Any targets that focus on increasing voluntary and community sector activity and volunteering need to be accompanied by strategies for doing so, including ensuring that voluntary and community groups have access to good quality infrastructure services. Across the county the ChangeUp programme is providing a planning framework for investing in such support. At a local level consultation with HVA members has identified some key issues for voluntary and community groups working 'on the ground'.

This includes:

- Accessible one-to-one support and training on governance, legislation, employment and management issues to assist voluntary and community groups to improve their performance.
- Consistent funding advice enabling voluntary and community groups to diversify their income sources, sustain activities, create employment opportunities and demonstrate increased skill/standards in fundraising and contract negotiation.
- A greater range of learning opportunities and increased take-up by voluntary and community sector workers (including volunteers), in order to develop an effective workforce.
- Supporting the development of volunteering opportunities with an emphasis on reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with progression routes to paid employment and support for volunteer managers.

In addition there is recognition that local **Community Strategy Target 11** (to increase voluntary and community sector activity – including community participation – by 5% by 2013) should be underpinned by a model of supporting community activity based on the Government's Firm Foundations model including:

- Access to community buildings or 'hubs'.
- Access to seedcorn funding, often small grants or community chests to stimulate grass-roots activity and capacity building.
- Access to support provided by workers with community development skills.
- A forum or network that is inclusive, open and participatory, owned by and accountable to the local community.
- Access to high quality and appropriate learning opportunities to equip people for active citizenship and engagement.

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It is worth noting that the period of growth within the sector between 2002 and 2007/08 has been accompanied by central government funding of around £1m to support a highly successful small grants programme, an injection of Lottery funding to support one to one support and training on governance, legislation, employment and management issues, and more recently two years AIF funding has helped to lever in an additional £1.3M of external funding to support sector activities. The targets currently being set for increasing growth over the next period are being done so at a time when investment in such infrastructure support is diminishing.

Whilst there is evidence of overall growth within the sector, it is also important to recognise that there has been decline in some areas. This is particularly evident in the play sector where increased bureaucracy and competition with the private and public sectors has squeezed smaller, voluntary, user-led providers out of the market place. This may become an increasing trend in other service areas with the shift away from grant aid to commissioning and procurement, which will tend to favour larger more well established organisations.

## Conclusions

The indication of growth in voluntary and community sector activity since 2002, provides some evidence that there is a healthy, thriving local voluntary and community sector in the town. The sector provides 1,756 paid jobs in the locality and provides significant value for money and added value in terms of the contribution made by volunteers.

There are significant numbers of voluntary and community groups managing on low levels of income. In response HVA has been able to target its work to build additional capacity in this area. E.g. through an AIF funded funding advice officer we have helped to lever in an additional £1.3M of external funding to support voluntary and community groups over the past two years.

Equally there is an increasing number of larger organisations who play a key role in delivering public services and promoting volunteering. This in turn requires attention and investment in the support required to help meet increasing demands for performance improvement, better governance, procurement and sustainability.

In terms of the Community Strategy and LAA, local targets are based around **National Indicator 7**, which will be used to test whether there is a healthy, thriving local third sector. Every local authority will be measured against this Indicator in terms of the role that it plays in shaping the local environment for voluntary and community sector organisations, for example, through its approach to partnership working, consultation, infrastructure investment, funding relationships, or in the way it designs, commissions and procures services.

HVA hopes that its 'State of the Sector' report will help to provide evidence of the value of further investment to support this approach at a local level.

**Report prepared by Jill Ferguson, March 2008**



**Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA)**

31a Priory Street, Hastings TN34 1EA

**Tel:** 01424 444010

**Fax:** 01424 432877

**Website:** [www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org](http://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org)

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