



Annual Report 2013 / 2014



Registered Company No: 5860971
Registered Charity No: 1116430

CVA Blyth Valley Annual Report 2013 / 2014

Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley

Annual Report 2013 / 2014

Contents:

	Page
Contents	2
Chairman's Report	3 / 4
Treasurer's Report	5
Summary of Accounts	6
Project Report	7 / 8
Training	9
Funding Advice	10
Community Development	11
Testimonials	12 / 13
Publications / Communication	14 / 15
CVABV Website	16
Trustees / Staff	17
Acknowledgements	18



Chairman's Report

The Chair's AGM Report gives a fair view of CVABV's achievements over the previous 12 months and highlights the challenges that have come to the fore and how we have addressed them.

I will start with the challenges. As with most VCS groups the main challenge remains, and that is how we can secure sufficient income to continue to provide the services and support we know are needed and are valued by our local groups.

Funding during 2013/14 has been a significant challenge, but I will highlight the way in which we have addressed this together with the staff team. One of our options was to review the number of staff employed by CVA and the services we provide and to reduce those to meet the levels of income we anticipated coming in. In the view of the board the resulting redundancies and the lower range of services and support available would have had too severe an impact on the quality of service we aim to provide.

Another option we considered was to use our unrestricted reserves, without challenge, and when those funds were all gone we would close up shop. This option was not what we wanted for CVABV.

Our solution was a demonstration of how the board and staff at CVA are a team, the board want to continue to support staff in the best way we can and the staff want to be able to support our groups as much as practically possible.

By working together it was agreed that staff would minimise the need for redundancies, with the majority of staff members reducing their working hours for most of 2013/14. Unfortunately, we could not avoid redundancies completely and we had to say farewell to Fiona Wardlaw early on in the financial year and we thank Fiona for her contribution to CVABV and wish her well for the future. The aim of these actions was to stabilise the funding situation with CVA and seek opportunities to expand and develop the services we provide.

Whilst this has an impact on how soon local groups can get an appointment to see staff, we feel we have been able to continue providing the range and the quality of services our groups have come to know.

I cannot underestimate my respect for the staff team in making such personal financial sacrifices to ensure that CVABV is able to continue working in the way we do. We feel we are an exceptionally good project, and we know we are not alone in that view.

Whilst many of our local funders have continued to show their faith in CVA, the longer term funding for VCS Infrastructure support continues to be difficult to secure.

Chairman's Report (continued)

The BIG Lottery do not have a clear view or strategy as to how VCS groups can be effectively supported at the grass roots level or whether they intend to financially support this area of work at all.

Given the challenges that we have overcome and the challenges we continue to face, it does give me great pleasure to highlight some of the successes we have enabled over this period:

- CVABV are an accredited learning centre with the ONE Awards, formerly the Open College Network (OCN) in the North East.
- CVABV has developed a successful partnership with the Blyth Valley Children's Centres to support them in identifying and engaging with 'hard to reach' families in Blyth Valley.
- We have contracted with a number of local groups to provide more direct delivery of services and support, with local groups.
- We have continued to provide relevant information to local groups on a regular basis and not least
- We have continued to support local groups in becoming established, to become more sustainable to improve and increase the level and quality of local services, which has resulted in CVA supporting local groups to access over £1.3m in external funding. Given that this was at a time when staff were working on a part time basis the levels of support provided and the income brought in to Blyth Valley is quite remarkable.

It is seeing the actual outcomes and the benefits of the support provided by CVA staff, that assures me that CVA is worth supporting through these difficult times, sometimes battling against the odds, to ensure our local groups receive the quality support CVA are able to provide and I am committed to support staff in providing this support for many years to come.

Dave Johnston
Chair



Treasurer's Report

2013/14 was a difficult time for CVABV. With the end of the Fair Shares programme and the BASIS funding towards the end of 2012, we knew that the legacy of these funds coming to an end would impact on CVA for some time to come.

We did however, know we had reasonable levels of 'free reserves' available to help us in adjusting and managing any transition to new funding programmes coming forward to support VCS Infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the programmes that we felt would come 'on stream' over the past 12 months have not come to fruition and as such CVA had to 'cut its cloth' to ensure we did not run out of funding too soon.

Through a period of negotiation with staff, we were able to reduce costs, principally by staff agreeing to work reduced hours for a temporary period.

This action has allowed CVA to stabilise its financial position towards the end of this financial period.

For the whole year we have an operating loss of £65319, and whilst this is significant, it is my role to inform you that the majority of this loss was during the first 6 months of the year, while we were negotiating with staff.

The resulting actions have stabilised CVA's financial position for now, we remain vigilant but are flexible over how we operate in the future.

Where we have the opportunity to invest in new ways of working, which are in the best interest of local groups and the long term interests of CVA, then we will do so.

Whilst it is never a good thing to have to come to an AGM and report significant financial losses, I hope we have demonstrated that the board are vigilant in taking action as required, whilst also looking to invest in the ever changing needs of our local groups, as appropriate.

David Vaughan
Treasurer



Summary of Accounts

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income and Expenditure Account) For the Year Ended 31 March 2014

	Notes	<u>2014</u>		<u>2013</u>
		<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Incoming Resources</u>		£	£	£
Activities to further our objects:				
Grants Received etc		37,313	44,263	81,576
Investment Income:				
Bank Interest Received		-	254	254
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		37,313	44,517	81,830
<u>Resources Expended</u>				
Charitable Activities		49,937	95,912	145,849
Governance Costs		-	1,200	1,200
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		49,937	97,112	147,049
<u>Net Movement in Funds</u>	3	(12,624)	(52,595)	(65,319)
Total Funds Brought Forward		15,538	104,798	120,336
Total Funds Carried Forward	£	2,914	52,203	55,117

None of our activities were acquired or discontinued and there were no recognised gains or losses other than as shown above during the above two financial years.



Project Report

Whilst VCS funding continues to be difficult for all groups to access, CVA have continued to provide high quality advice, information and development support to our local groups. Once again the support provided has proved to be highly effective and has resulted in significant levels of funding coming in to the VCS in Blyth Valley.

Taking into account the fact that we did have one redundancy this year, and that another member of staff worked primarily with local Children's Centres for most of this year and the remaining members of staff reducing working hours down to 3 days per week, the outcomes we have achieved have been fantastic.

The work we have been able to prioritise includes:

- The CVABV e-zine, which is distributed to approximately 400 contacts and continues to receive positive feedback, on both the content and the presentation of information in the e-zine, from our local groups.
- Development support, building skills and the capacity of local groups to deliver services more effectively
- Funding advice and support, with over £1.3m secured for local groups following advice and support from CVABV.
- Community Centres, with specific developmental support to key centres, with improvements in the number and range of services provided, with higher levels of sustainable 'earned' income achieved and reduced running costs by introducing energy efficiencies and minimising waste.

We have worked to develop new enterprise activities with local groups, which will improve the viability and sustainability of those groups over the coming years and is an area that CVA will continue to develop.

Project Report (continued)

Sadly some of our services have had to be reduced, and whilst we did receive Awards for All funding to deliver a dedicated training programme to local groups, overall, the number and range of training sessions provided has reduced. Our commitment to training is still strong, we have the appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver more training and during this year we have become an accredited ONE Awards centre with the ability to develop and deliver appropriate training courses in the coming years.

We have not been able to support community networks and forums as well as we have been able to do in the past, but where needed we have brought local groups together to look at opportunities of working together in partnerships and/or consortia to secure funds to develop and extend current services.

The outlook for CVA, in the short term, is difficult but if we can get through this period, we hope to be able to offer additional services and support to support the further development of VCS services in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley.

T S Bradley
Chief Executive Officer



Training

CVABV have had a busy year delivering a series of training courses throughout the year with funding from an Awards for All grant for 'How To' courses. These courses were held at various community venues in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley, using facilitators from a variety of quality training providers as well as our own Capacity Building Team.

Course topics included:

- Basic Finance for Community Groups
- Management Committee Roles and Responsibilities
- Finance Training
- Disclosure and Barring Services
- Facebook for Community Groups
- Emergency First Aid at Work
- How to improve your funding applications
- How to apply to Awards for All
- Basic Computing (Publisher)
- How to set up a Community Group
- Basic Computing (Excel)
- Minute / Note Taking

**“Very Informative”
“Excellent trainer
who made course
interesting,
amusing and
informative”**

**“Good concise
training showing
how to avoid the
pitfalls”**

**“Good course,
please continue
with courses as
long as you can
get funding!!”**

During this financial year (2013 / 2014) we had 125 delegates attending the above training sessions, building the capacity of local VCS organisations.

**“Very interesting,
the small
workshop worked
well for my ability”**

**“I found the
course extremely
useful and it will
alter some of my
processes”**

**“I often find
using computers
difficult, CVA
staff member
made it easy to
understand”**



Funding Advice

Developing the skills, knowledge and capacity of local VCS organisations in relation to funding continues to be the greatest concern and the highest priority for the groups we work with.

Our funding advice services are tailored to the needs of each individual organisation, enabling them to produce quality funding applications and ensuring they have all of the necessary policies and procedures in place to be fit for funding. We also support groups to identify opportunities for generating their own income becoming less grant dependent at a time when grant funding is increasingly difficult to secure.

We specialise in giving practical, grassroots funding advice to community groups and voluntary organisations in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley, working closely with all of the people we help, enabling them to do it themselves rather than doing things for them. Building their personal capacity in this way ensures that the next time they need to apply for funding they can do this themselves or with minimal support.

Our advice and support includes:

- **Producing a project budget**
- **Full cost recovery**
- **Identifying appropriate funders**
- **Direct help with understanding application forms**
- **Checking grant applications before they are sent to funders**
- **Ensuring that applications match the grant-giving criteria of funders**
- **Empowering community groups to speak the funders' language**
- **Independent referee support**
- **Providing information sheets to help give your applications the greatest chance of success.**

Our funding service continues to respond to the demands of our local groups and is as busy as ever, providing advice, information and training to help local VCS organisations become more confident and self-reliant in fundraising.

During the financial year 2013/2014 over £1.3 million was received through funding applications made by groups we have helped. This is an exceptional achievement in the present difficult funding climate.



Community Development

CVABV community development services are designed to equip local groups with the knowledge and know how to make a real difference in their local community. We have a successful track record in supporting local groups to develop new initiatives and in attracting the necessary funding and resources to address local needs.

Our experienced, well qualified and dedicated team are extremely effective in delivering a wide range of capacity building and community development services enabling our local VCS to make a sustained impact in the local community.

Our work is tailored to the needs of each individual group, targeting our resources where they are most needed, often working in hard to reach communities who need one-to-one support, including:

- **How to form a community group**
- **Appropriate legal structures for VCS groups**
- **Management committee development**
- **Drafting and adopting constitutions**
- **Policies and procedures**
- **Safeguarding**
- **Basic financial controls and systems**
- **Project development**
- **Publicity and promotion**
- **Monitoring and evaluation**
- **Legal issues**
- **Health and safety**

As with all our support, we aim to pass on our 'how to' skills to the groups we work with rather than doing things for them. As a result of this approach groups are enabled so that we have a more informed, more qualified and more experienced VCS equipped with many of the necessary skills they need to deliver their services more effectively.

Testimonials

“CVABV have been working intensively with Eastfield Estates Community Association over the past year and with their help we now have a thriving kids club, a new parent and toddler group and we are taking 50 excited local children to see Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs at the Theatre Royal this Christmas. Without their help and advice this would not be possible”.

***Karen Mitchell, Vice-Chair
Eastfield Estates
Community Association***

“CVA Blyth Valley has a strong impact on community groups! I would not have taken on the running of a group had I not had the back-up of CVABV staff. I am sure many other groups would have the same opinion”

***Jean Coleman, Chair/Treasurer
Nelson Village Art Group***

“On behalf of all the trustees may I on their behalf extend to you our warmest greetings and our profound gratitude for your support in assisting our charities in the furtherance of our work with children.

From the first point of contact your enthusiastic dedicated team, assist with their meticulous application in providing a service of funding, assistance through meetings, follow up telephone conversations, and email updates in providing a first class service for local charities which is assisting the charities in their quest to further community cohesion.

The services CVABV provides is essential in expanding the legal roles and responsibilities for the countless unpaid volunteers who play major roles within our local charities and their communities.

We all say a very big thank you”.

**Shirley Anderson, Group Chair 1st Seaton Sluice Scouts Group /
Friends of the Lazarus Home for Girls**

Testimonials (continued)

“Our first point of contact with CVABV was by letter inviting Croft Camera Club to a Funding Event to meet potential funders. From this I met with members of CVABV at their Blyth offices who gave me a tremendous amount of support and advice. Subsequent visits were arranged and my funding bid was sent to Awards for All. Our bid of nearly £4,000 was successful, which has enabled the camera club to purchase new equipment.

I cannot stress the importance of the CVA Blyth Valley team enough, without whose help we could not have achieved our grant. The whole process was made simple and easy, in fact they filled in forms and answered most of the questions with a little help from me. We could and would not have received our grant if it wasn't for the great work and expertise of CVABV staff. Keep up the great work that you do it is invaluable source of knowledge to anyone looking for funding advice. Thank you”.

Stuart Olley
Secretary Croft Camera Club

“I have again this year received professional quality support from the staff team at CVABV”.
Eileen Cartie, Manager
Buffalo Community Centre

“The support from CVABV has enabled the Credit Union to extend its services across Blyth Valley. CVA helped us to identify new external funders, to develop a funding strategy, and to structure funding applications which ultimately proved to be highly successful”.
CUSEN (Credit Union South East Northumberland)

“The staff at CVA Blyth Valley have helped Blyth and District Talking Newspaper draw up a proper balance sheet, which was submitted with an application and enabled our group to obtain a grant of over £2500.

Without the help of CVA we may not have succeeded in gaining this grant”.

Valerie Lockhart
Secretary, Blyth & District Talking Newspaper

Publications / Communication

E-zines, Information Sheets and Facebook

CVABV communicates with local voluntary and community groups in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley by producing the following:

- **E-zines – an electronic bulletin produced fortnightly with updates and information on current issues, emailed to 393 contacts. The e-zine is a great mechanism to inform our local groups about imminent events and activities as well as funding deadlines.**
- **Information Sheets – further information can be found on the following page.**
- **Facebook – a social utility that connects people with friends and others which is a great mechanism for contacting with our groups regarding up to date news, information and facts.**

Our e-zines can be used to promote local events and meetings, obtain funding advice, seek information on funders' criteria, find out what training courses are available, see what's on in the area and to find out about other local projects.

CVABV welcomes contributions from local VCS groups and local authorities who may have items of interest which is relevant to the areas of Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley. If you would like to be included on our database please contact us by emailing info@cvabv.org.uk



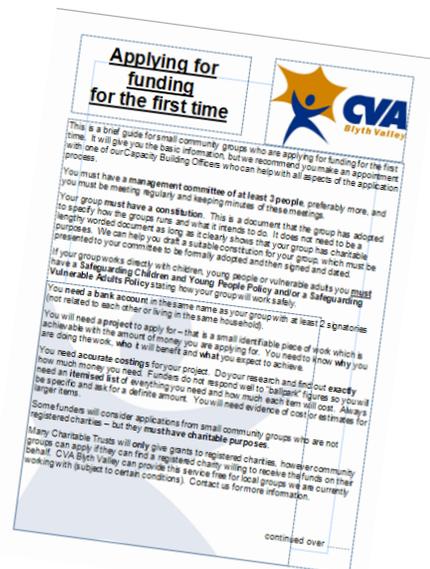
Publications / Communication (continued)

Information Sheets

CVABV have a number of Information Sheets available to our VCS groups covering a variety of topics to enable effective management for our local voluntary and community groups.

The information sheets are under the topics of:

- Starting a New group
- Who can be a Trustee
- Legal Structures
- Charitable Status
- Roles and Responsibilities of Management Committees and Trustees
- Good Governance / Effective Management
- Policies and Procedures
- Financial Management
- Project Planning
- Fit for Funding
- Searching for Funding
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Organising a Community Event
- Useful Contacts
- Applying for funding for the first time
- Annual General Meetings
- Fundraising Do's and Don'ts
- Chairing a Meeting
- Minute Taking
- Report Writing



All of the above are available to download from our website at:

<http://www.cvabv.org.uk>

CVABV Website

www.cvabv.org.uk

Our website contains information regarding the services and support offered by CVA Blyth Valley. We continually keep the website up-to-date.



Web-page headings identify:

**About Us / Services / CVA Membership / Gallery
Network & Partnerships / Contact Us / Communication
Resources / Funding / Training / Events
Information Sheets / Useful Links / Fair Shares / Volunteering
News / Within Blyth Valley / All Communities Together
Blyth Valley Arts & Leisure / Blyth Valley Children's Centres
Community Centres / Community Forums / Extended Services
Homes for Northumberland / Northumberland Libraries
Warm Zone / What's On in the Area / Credit Union / Venues for Hire**



CVA Blyth Valley Annual Report 2013 / 2014

Trustees

CVA Blyth Valley Executive Committee Members for 2013 / 2014:

David Johnston	Chairman
Mark Beresford	Vice Chair
David Vaughan	Treasurer
Paul Smith	Executive Committee Member
Rob Bailey	Executive Committee Member
Rick Young	Executive Committee Member
Craig Nicholson	Executive Committee Member
Grant Davey	NCC Representative

Staff Team

Thom Bradley	Chief Executive
Pauline Blake	Capacity Building Officer
Sybil Pattie	Administrator
Gina Robson	Capacity Building Officer
Jill Oxnard	Capacity Building Officer
Fiona Wardlaw	Fair Shares Community Involvement & Engagement Officer

Acknowledgements

CVABV would like to acknowledge that the services and support we provide and ongoing projects would not have been possible without the dedicated help of voluntary workers, the provision of funding, community organisations and establishments in Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley.

Our sincere thanks go to:

- Community Foundation
- Awards for All
- Funding Information North East
- Northumberland County Council / Connect 4Change partnership
- Joicey Trust
- Rothley Trust
- William Leech Charity
- R W Mann Trust
- Sherburn House Charity
- Ballinger Charitable Trust
- Ridley Family Charity
- Barbour Trust
- Hadrian Trust
- 1989 Willan Charitable Trust
- Blyth Town Council
- Cramlington Town Council
- Co-operative Community Fund
- Sir James Knott Trust
- NESEP
- ONE Awards

And last but not least, the officers and members of the Management Committee, the staff at CVA Blyth Valley and other members of the community who have contributed during the year.

Thank You