

Pentagon Partnership e-bulletin

December 2008

Welcome to the Pentagon Partnership e-bulletin for December 2008.

Pentagon Partnership is the strategic partnership for third sector involvement in the economic regeneration of the Tyne & Wear City Region.

As well as raising the business skills of the third sector, we act as the interface between the sector and the new Tyne & Wear City Region governance structures, which make important economic decisions about the City Region (Tyne & Wear as well as parts of North Durham and South Northumberland).

We carry out our functions in three ways:

- Capacity Building – increasing the business awareness and partnership-readiness of the sector.
- Consultation and Representation – giving the sector a say on City Region policies, facilitating and supporting the third sector representation on decision making partnerships.
- Information – informing the sector of the latest City Region and economic policy developments.

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City Region News

Transport Governance Review

Earlier this year, the City Region Interim Executive Board agreed to proceed with a review of the governance of transport in the City Region. The objective of the review is to get better strategic decision-making for transport and in turn support sustainable economic growth. A proposed way forward is a strategic transport authority, based on the Transport for London model.

As part of our role as the interface between the sector and the new Tyne & Wear City Region governance structures, we were asked to feed third sector viewpoints into the Transport Governance Review, commissioned by the City Region Transport Review Group and undertaken by Atkins.

Our collection of third sector viewpoints is available [here](#), and Atkins' summary of stage 1 of the review, and next steps, is available [here](#).

We will continue to attend the Transport Review Group, and lobby for third sector representation on the final governance structures. An event focussing on third sector involvement in the City Region transport agenda will take place in March (See Multi Area Agreement update for further information)

Multi Area Agreement update

The MAA is a contract between the City Region and central government that commits both parties to work together in order to deliver agreed priorities for the economic development of the area.

- For an overview of the MAA, visit www.pentagonpartnership.org.uk/documents/cityregion/maaataglace.pdf
- To read the whole document, visit <http://www.pentagonpartnership.org.uk/Documents/CityRegion/MAA.pdf>

Latest news:

- The City Region team are working with various Whitehall departments on the 'asks' of government.
- Members of the new (non-interim) Employment and Skills Board are currently being recruited.

Pentagon's plans for third sector engagement with City Region structures and the Multi Area Agreement include a series of events in March to raise awareness of the third sector's role in each of the three priority areas (employment, skills and transport), at venues across Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland. Look out for more information in January's e-bulletin.

Pentagon News

Gift Aid and Payroll Giving - a Business Plus networking event

Thursday 8th January 2009

12noon-2.00pm

Stannington Village Hall, Main Street, Stannington, Northumberland, NE61 6EL

The first Business Plus event of 2009 is a session on Gift Aid and Payroll Giving. We'll be exploring how third sector organisations can maximise their income using tax-efficient giving.

As usual the event will feature a free lunch and formal and informal networking sessions: a great chance for you to share ideas and experiences with partners from outside your local area.

Places are limited so please book a place now to avoid disappointment.

[Click here to download a booking form](#)

Human Resources and Employment Law

Joined by Joe Thornhill from the law firm Ward Hadaway, we explored employment law and human resources issues in the current financial climate.

[Click here to download Joe's presentation](#)

If you would like to sign up to receive copies of INSIGHT, Ward Hadaway's monthly employment law newsletter, and invitations to their regular series of free seminars and workshops, please email joe.thornhill@wardhadaway.com for further information.

If you would like to receive hard copies of these documents, as well as details of Praesidium, Ward Hadaway's employment law protection service, we have a number of copies of Joe's delegate packs from the event; please contact us and we'll send you one.

Welfare reform and the third sector

You may remember from [October's e-bulletin](#) that we offered one place at a DWP / Centre for Public Policy Seminars event on November 17th about the welfare green paper. Adam Stewart from CSV Newcastle attended and his report on the day follows:

I was pleased to attend a recent seminar discussing the Government's green paper on welfare reform **No One Written Off: Reforming Welfare to Reward Responsibility**. My place was funded by the Pentagon Partnership to allow representation from a third sector organisation from this region.

The proposed changes will affect millions of people currently claiming certain types of benefits. The main changes will affect those claiming long term sickness benefits, mainly Incapacity Benefit (IB), and those on Income Support (IS), particularly lone parents with dependent children.

Adam Sharples, a director at the DWP, spoke of the need to reduce the number of working age people claiming sickness benefits, currently some 2.64 million working-age people, costing the Government almost £12.5 billion. This will be achieved by abolishing IB and moving people over to its replacement – Employment and Support Allowance(ESA), or, if claimants are 'well' enough, they will be moved onto Jobseekers Allowance (JSA).

At Volunteer Centre Newcastle where I work we have seen a significant increase in volunteering enquiries throughout 2008, and many prospective volunteers are looking to volunteer to enhance their short term or long term employability. This is a key selling point of volunteering that we are keen to promote, along with the fact that volunteering can also be a stepping stone for people who don't consider themselves ready for the job market because of illness or lack of confidence.

This presents a real challenge for third sector organisations within Tyne and Wear. The combination of a contracting job market and numerous higher and further education establishments means that there is a ready supply of potential volunteers who have confidence, drive and an aptitude for learning. These are attributes people on IB often don't have in the first instance, especially the 40% of current IB claimants who have had mental health issues.

A 'league table' of volunteering is developing within our region, where volunteering roles which offer the chance to gain particular skills and experience are in high demand, and sometimes even have waiting lists. It is understandable why organisations who have a ready supply of confident and educated potential volunteers would not pro-actively advertise to those who might be lacking confidence, but if they don't they will end up with a less than diverse volunteer base which brings with it its own drawbacks.

Another key issue which was discussed was the desire of the Government to involve the third sector in achieving these aims. One speaker, Prof. Tony Chapman – Director of Social Futures Institute at Teesside University, went into detail about how the third sector would be asked to help facilitate the Government's welfare reforms.

The Cultural Volunteering projects running throughout our region, funded by One NorthEast, were mentioned as an example of schemes delivered by the Third Sector to help current claimants find work based skills through managed volunteering. Our Centre is pleased to be a partner in one such project based in Newcastle led by The Ouseburn Trust. It is clear from the prospective volunteers we see that there is a high demand from people claiming benefits wanting quality volunteering opportunities with role/job related training, which they hope will give them the experience that employers want.

It is important that these types of project are properly supported with long term funding and recognition that positive results will not happen overnight.

If you would like to read an extended version of this article, please visit <http://www.volunteercentrenewcastle.org.uk/news/indexnewsdwp.php>

Welfare Reform White Paper

Since the seminar, the Department for Work and Pensions has produced a White Paper on the reforms, entitled *Raising expectations and increasing support: reforming welfare for the future*, which is available to download [here](#).

Other News

Chain Reaction – Financing Social Change

Jon Goodwin from Pentagon Partnership recently attended a seminar on 'Financing Social Change' at the Chain Reaction conference in London.

The seminar looked at new and existing financial tools available to support social change including:

- [Social Finance](#) – a new investment bank for the third sector, putting unclaimed assets to work for social good. More information at
- [Triodos Bank](#) – linking ethical investors with third sector initiatives that work for positive social, environmental and cultural change.
- Various Government initiatives, some of which should be familiar to Pentagon e-bulletin readers:
 - [FutureBuilders Tender Fund](#) and new Consortia Fund (see below)
 - [Social Enterprise Investment Fund \(Dept of Health\)](#)
 - [The proposed risk capital fund for social enterprise](#)

It was noted at the seminar that many of these methods of financing social change require robust systems of evidencing social impact. New readers may be unaware of ***Evidencing our Impact***, a Pentagon publication from earlier in the year which outlines various methods of social accounting and impact measurement available to third sector organisations. The document is available [here](#).

Local Works! Convention 2008

Local Works! is an annual gathering of local partners striving to reduce worklessness, promote enterprise, and regenerate communities.

This year's Local Works! took place in Liverpool in November. Delegates heard presentations on the following topics:

- Employment and Skills Boards and Multi Area Agreements
- Learning From New Deal for Communities
- Joining up the Customer Journey - a multi access approach to employment and skills
- Working with Flexible New Deal - the Provider Perspective
- Linking Skills and Employment, A North West Perspective
- Tackling Worklessness and Low Skills - the case for Devolution
- Using public procurement to boost employment
- The Recession is here: Local Challenges
- Working with communities to develop enterprise

All of the presentations, plus contact details for the key speakers, are available on the Local Works! website [here](#).

FutureBuilders consortia fund

Futurebuilders has launched a new fund specifically for consortia groups aiming to work together to win public service contracts. The Consortia Fund offers bespoke investment packages comprising loan finance and professional support, individually tailored to suit the needs of the consortium. There is no upper limit to the size of investment, but the minimum investment package is £50,000.

For further information, click [here](#).

And finally...

Season's Greetings from Pentagon Partnership staff and Steering Group members, and best wishes for a successful 2009.

Thank you for reading. Please feel free to circulate this e-bulletin to your networks. Read previous e-bulletins [here](#).

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