



## **Annual Report 2006/2007**

**West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector**

**Housing Network**

# **Foreword**

**Dave Hider**

**Convenor**

The Network has continued to make a significant difference to the influence the voluntary and community sector has on policy and strategic decision-making within the region. We have strengthened our representation on the key partnerships and responded to consultation documents, in order to ensure the sector's views are represented at the policy table. We have led on both research and policy development which in turn has informed the regional agenda. Over the next two years we will aim to strengthen the sector's influence and capacity to engage with the regional agenda. We will develop our links with 'hard to reach' groups. We will also promote good practice and highlight the vital role played by the sector in tackling the issues faced in the region.

A key priority for 2005/2006 was securing future funding for the Network as the funding from the Strategic Engagement fund came to an end in March 2006. I would like to thank Lloyds TSB Foundation for providing 18 months funding for the network under their Collaborative Grants Programme. Without this funding it is likely that the Network would have struggled to continue beyond 2006.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the work of the Network over the last year.

## **About WMVCSHN**

### **Aims and Objectives**

The WMVCSHN was established in 2001 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 it had over 75 members. It is a regional network for voluntary and community sector organisations with an interest in housing and the development of sustainable communities in the West Midlands.

The Network's overarching aim is to build a sustainable, informed, inclusive and influential regional Voluntary & Community Sector Housing Network. To achieve this the Network's aims are to: -

- Build on its inclusive approach to engagement and interaction with members.

- Strengthen its existing influence base in relation to the development of regional strategies and services.
- Ensure that effective practice is built into the policy process and that 'good practice' is promoted and shared.

## Governance

The Network has an adopted constitution and is structured around an Executive Committee, an Annual General Meeting and at least three general meetings a year. The General Meetings are open to all members of the network.

The Executive Committee members during the period April 2006 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 were:

Dave Hider (Convenor from January 2007.)	Herefordshire Supported Housing for Young People
Gary Clarke (Convenor November 2006-January 2007, Deputy Convenor until October 2006)	Dorcas Housing Association
Dave Brown (Deputy Convenor from October 2006)	Furniture Exchange Stafford
Duncan Miller (Treasurer)	Churches Housing Association Of Dudley and District
Jean Templeton	St Basil's Housing Association
Neelam Sunder ( from October 2006)	Homeless Link – West Midlands
Clare Rowntree (Convenor until October 2006)	Centrepoint
Nigel Potter	West Midlands Rural Housing Network/ Community First
Paul Butters (from October 2006 – March 2007)	West Midlands Area NUS
Liz Goddard (from April 2007)	West Midlands Area NUS
Carol Gallagher (Co-opted Member)	Nuneaton and Bedworth Doorway
Sheila Neary (Co-opted Member from October 2006)	Valuing Age and Experience Network
Susan Wall (from April 2007)	Centrepoint
Lynne Beighton (Co-opted Member from January 2007)	Secretariat

The accountable body for the Network during the period of review was Nuneaton and Bedworth Doorway.

## **Network Activities**

The Network's activities include:

- Holding consultation events and conferences on issues related to housing, sustainable communities and the regional and sub-regional policy agenda;
- Responding to policy / consultation documents and producing reports aimed at influencing the policy agenda;
- Producing and disseminating briefing papers, news/policy updates etc for Network members;
- Commissioning research;
- Holding training sessions on issues of concern to members or to address skill gaps;
- Maintaining and developing a web-based resource ([www.housingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.housingnetwork.org.uk))
- Working with and supporting other networks, such as the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Network, in order to influence the regional agenda;
- Reflecting the views of the sector on key regional and sub-regional decision-making forums;
- Identifying and disseminating good practice.

## **Achievements against the Network's Business**

### **Plan**

In April 2005 the Network agreed its Business plan for the period 2005/2006-2006/2007. The Business Plan was reviewed in January 2007 and five high level outcomes were identified. Progress, during the year, against these five outcomes is now reviewed.

### **Outcome 1: The sector's level of influence on West Midlands regional and sub-regional policies and strategies is increased.**

- The Network submitted a consultation response to the West Midlands Regional Assembly on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy – Phase 2 Revision.
- The Network submitted a Discussion Paper to the Supporting People Expert Reference Group.
- The Regional Homelessness Implementation Group, which a Network member chairs, organised conferences in each of the sub-region. These brought together about 300 people to develop action plans detailing how the regional homelessness strategy will be implemented across the region. A consultant has now been commissioned to turn these initial plans into SMART action plans.

- Research findings were disseminated from two projects commissioned by the Network: 'Supporting People and Small Providers', and 'the Voluntary and Community Sector's contribution to regeneration'.
- A brief was produced to commission research on 'model agreements: how larger organizations can work with small/ specialist Supporting People Providers'. Funding has not yet been secured for this project.

**Outcome 2: The sector's capacity to engage with the West Midlands policy agenda, along with individual members' knowledge and skills is increased.**

- Details of key regional/ sub-regional conferences/ seminars (organised by other organisations) were circulated to members.
- Three consultation events/ general Network meetings were held which focused on Supporting People (specifically on procurement and small providers), Regeneration, Homelessness and Local Area Agreements.
- The Network's website was up dated. Over 40,000 viewed hits were recorded over the period May 2006 to May 2007.
- Links were strengthened with sister networks.

**Outcome 3: The Network's ability to engage with and support hard to reach groups is improved**

- Minutes of meetings were circulated to the wider membership
- The Network's membership list was updated and reviewed.
- An initial paper was produced on 'defining small and hard to reach groups'.

**Outcome4: Good practice is disseminated and shared**

- Good practice was highlighted in the case study report on, 'the Voluntary and Community Sector's contribution to regeneration'. The findings were disseminated to members and the report was placed on the Network's website.

- Good practice examples were submitted to the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and included in their 'Guide to the Delivery of Affordable Housing in the West Midlands.'
- Briefings/policy updates circulated to members.
- A slot was included on the agenda of all general meetings to allow Network members to disseminate information and good practice.

### **Outcome5: The Network is sustainable and is able to secure long-term funding**

- The Executive Committee reviewed the Business plan in January 2007 and agreed to receive regular reports on progress against the Business plan at future meetings.
- An Annual report for 2006/2007 was produced and made available on the website.
- The respective roles of Treasurer and Accountable Body were agreed.
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Doorway were re-appointed as the Accountable body.
- LTB Consultancy Ltd was appointed to provide secretariat and policy development support.
- During the period April 2006 to September 2006, the Network managed to continue, albeit with a much reduced programme of activity, through voluntary effort and the limited resources it had available. In September 2006 funding was secured from Lloyds TSB for an 18 month period (September 2006- March 2008).

## Income and Expenditure

Income and expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2007 was as follows: -

	£
<b>Income 2006/2007</b>	
Brought Forward from 2005/2006	9,959
Grant from Lloyds TSB (for the period 09.06-09.07)	20,000
<b>Total Income</b>	
	29,959
<b>Expenditure 2006/2007</b>	
IT development/Website maintenance	59
Accountable Body Fees	2,000
Events/ meetings organised by the Network (including room hire, refreshments, member expenses).	942
Secretariat ,Policy Development/ Specialist Support/ briefings for members	3,280
RAWM Membership	50
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>6,291</b>
<b>Total Funds Carried Forward 2007/2008</b>	<b>23,668</b>