SURVEY OF THE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR IN EAST HERTS 2007/8

Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector in Broxbourne and East Herts

www.cvsbeh.org.uk
A thriving voluntary sector is a necessary and essential feature of a successful community. This report attempts to introduce the voluntary and community sector in East Herts and demonstrate its value to the local community. Data used for the report comes from a wide variety of published sources as well as from a detailed survey of 327 voluntary and community groups operating in East Herts, carried out by CVS for Broxbourne & East Herts during the winter of 2007/8.

CVS for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH) is the leading infrastructure organisation providing services to voluntary and community groups in the District of East Herts.

The predominantly rural District of East Herts is the largest of the ten District Council areas within Hertfordshire with a geographic area of 184 square miles. In 1991 the population of East Hertfordshire was 117,342. By 2004 there had been a significant growth in the population by 11.7% to 131,000. This represents the highest growth in population in Hertfordshire. Just fewer than 90,000 residents live in East Herts’ five main towns: Bishops Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware; while almost 40,000 people live in over 100 villages and hamlets.

Between April 2005 and March 2007 CVSBEH delivered a dedicated project entitled “East Herts VOCAL” within the district, which resulted in direct contact being made with approaching 150 voluntary and community groups. In April 2007 the District of East Herts formally became part of the CVS’s constituted area and of 297 CVS members at the end of this financial year (March 2008), there were 206 CVS members active in East Herts.
DEFINING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

This report is mostly concerned with the voluntary and community sector comprising registered charities and community groups. What distinguishes voluntary and community sector groups is that they are independent and their management is ultimately in the hands of voluntary committees or unpaid trustees.

The Third Sector includes community groups, voluntary organisations, faith and equality groups, political parties, trade unions, charities, social enterprises and co-operatives, health trusts, housing trusts and housing corporations, etc.

The Third Sector Strategy of the Department for Communities and Local Government spells out a “clear expectation” that the sector should be “a key partner to local government in creating strong and sustainable communities”. The strategy recognises the sector as:

- an advocate and campaigner for individuals and groups who need a stronger voice;
- a trusted catalyst for cohesion that can bring people together;
- a force for social justice and equality;
- an increasingly important partner in the design and delivery of services.

There are also strong local government incentives for East Herts to encourage volunteering and strengthen social cohesion through the Local Area Agreement*, empower communities through the transfer of assets and the development of community anchors (Quirk Report**), and work in closer partnership with the voluntary sector in the design and delivery of public services through the East Herts Compact***.

“CVSBEH has 206 active members in East Herts”

* see www.myhertslaa.net
** see www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/makingassetswork
*** see www.cvsbeh.org.uk
METHODOLOGY

A final report commissioned by the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Consortium, entitled “Value and Volume: an introduction to the voluntary and community sector in Hertfordshire” was published in November 2007*. The report contained data drawn from the Charity Commission, Guidestar (an online national database of charitable and voluntary organisations) and the Hertfordshire Community Information database (online on Hertsdirect) to map the voluntary and community sector in Hertfordshire. It demonstrated that there were approximately 1,000 voluntary and community groups active in East Herts.

CVSBEH began by examining this data and removing groups that were already known to the CVS and those that, despite having an address in East Herts, were active outside the area or were clearly not a voluntary and community group (approx 300 groups). A simple one-page form was then sent out with a covering letter, a reply-paid envelope and an information leaflet about the work of the CVS to a defined list of over 700 groups. The survey asked for the same information that had already been supplied by CVS members i.e. for the Focus/Beneficiaries of the organisation; the Services they offer to their beneficiaries; the Resources they have access to i.e. the level and source of their annual income as well as the number of full and part-time staff, volunteers and management committee members.

This survey also enabled the CVS to check contact information (many groups gave their up-to-date contact details) and to find out which groups were still active in East Herts. Finally the groups were asked if they had heard of the CVS, to ascertain the level of awareness of the work of the CVS in the voluntary sector of East Herts.

Although we have disregarded 300 of the 1,000 groups listed in the Value and Volume Survey, we can still estimate that there are probably a similar number of hidden, unfunded groups that do not appear in any surveys. We can make this assumption because a number of our own members did not appear on the Value and Volume Survey. In total 82 (57% of our East Herts membership at the time of the survey in October 2007) did not appear on the Value and Volume Survey. This is mainly because the Value & Volume Survey was based on the address given as the main base of operation for each group and many of our groups offering services into East Herts are not actually based in East Herts. The district bases of those 82 groups are detailed on the table below.

As shown, 27(18.5%) of the CVSBEH member groups not included on the East Herts section of the Hertfordshire V&V Survey do have addresses in East Herts and 21 are based in the neighbouring district of Broxbourne. Most of the other groups were included in the survey under the CVS’s where they are based. 12 member groups are based outside Hertfordshire.

Did you know?
There are approximately 1,000 VCS groups active in East Herts!

* see www.eastspace.net/hertsinfrastructure/documents/final_V&V_report.pdf
The survey* was sent out to 705 groups not already in membership of CVSBEH, partly to check that the contact information for each group was correct and partly to request information about how they work, i.e. their geographical area of service, what the focus of their organisation is (or who their beneficiaries are), what services they offer and what resources (financial and human) they have access to.

Additionally, the groups were asked whether they had heard of the CVS (of the 157 that gave us this information, just over half indicated they had) and which CVS services would be of benefit to them. Of those surveyed, 59 (31%) accepted this offer, meaning that the total membership at March 2008 was 206 members active in East Herts (see also introduction).

Of the 705 groups surveyed, 213 responded (approx 30%), which gave the following initial data:

- Groups active in East Herts: 182
- Groups that have disbanded: 18
- Groups whose main contact has died/retired/moved away: 5
- Groups who are active outside the East Herts area: 6
- Groups that asked not to be added to database: 2

TOTAL responded: 213

Therefore, the total number of completed surveys returned was 327** (being 182 new groups and 145 existing CVSBEH members). This demonstrated an exceptionally high percentage return (32.7%) of the total estimated groups in East Herts (Value & Volume Report) and vindicated our methodology.

172 groups that responded were registered with the Charity Commission.

In the course of analysing the returned data from the survey, we have become aware that we will have, in the main, captured information from those groups that have the capacity, records and willingness to answer all of the questions we asked. This may not have been the case with many of the 450+ groups who did not respond in any form to the survey and who are traditionally difficult to engage in this type of qualitative research.

If we make the assumption that most of the groups with capacity (for example adequate human resources and record keeping) are already known to us or responded to the survey, we feel it is appropriate to estimate that there are still, potentially 1,000 groups active in East Herts and that more than half of these are extremely small and hidden from data sharing exercises such as this. This is most relevant in the Mapping Data (section D – Resources) section of this report.

* see Appendix 1  ** see Appendix 2
**THE MAPPING DATA**

**a) Geographical Area of Service**

The rural nature of the district of East Herts is reflected in the geographical breakdown of the areas of service of those groups included in our completed survey:

- 165 groups (50%) operate in their local town/parish only
- 76 groups (23%) operate across the district of East Herts
- 60 groups (18%) operate countywide in Hertfordshire
- 20 groups (6%) operate nationally

When we further break down the distribution of organisations serving their local town/parish into the areas surrounding the five main towns in East Herts, Bishops Stortford; Buntingford; Hertford; Sawbridgeworth and Ware, we can see the spread is fairly even across the region:

Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth, despite being smaller in population and size are still well served. The survey revealed that there are many small, active parishes in the East Herts District, particularly around Buntingford.

**Did you know?**

50% of the East Herts groups operate in their local town/parish.
b) Focus or Beneficiaries

The survey shows that the majority of groups operating in East Herts are focused on children & young people, families and the elderly.

Focus Analysis

The high number of groups working with children and young people is common to many of the districts in Hertfordshire. CVSBEH is pro-active in developing a specialist information network for the children and young peoples voluntary and community sector in East Herts that will work closely with the East Herts District Childrens Trust Partnership.

The number of groups serving the elderly reflects the profile of East Herts as one of the districts in Hertfordshire with the highest proportion of older people. This and many other information data sets are evident in the 2006 'Hidden Need'** report produced by the Hertfordshire Community Foundation which has statistics on deprivation, poverty and employment levels in Hertfordshire. It demonstrated that East Herts is the least deprived area in Hertfordshire overall, but that, as in most districts in Hertfordshire, its deprivation is most evident in small geographical pockets or ‘super output areas’.

The small number of BME groups active in East Herts (CVSBEH are in contact with only 4) reflects the low percentage of non-white ethnic residents in the region (2.9% in 2001), which is the lowest in Hertfordshire, the highest being Watford at 14%. The ‘Have Your Say’** report – commissioned by the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in 2006, indicated that the local ethnic minority population has increased in the last 5 years. The newer communities are mainly concentrated around the Bishops Stortford area, due, in part, to the influx of migrant workers, many from Eastern Europe, working at or close to Stanstead airport.

Continued...
It is important to note that a larger number of ethnic minority people living in a local authority district may not equate to a ‘community’ or even a spatial concentration of those people in particular parts of the district. Furthermore, it can be where people are fewest in number that they may suffer most from harassment and from a lack of culturally specific services (e.g. shops, translators, places of worship) and community support. CVSBEH is active in partnership work with East Herts District Council and now employ a Small Groups Development Worker with an aim to address issues around the lack of BME groups in East Herts.

Of the beneficiaries listed as ‘Other’, by far the greatest number is local residents of that parish/village. The groups that tended to tick the ‘Other’ box were closely related to parish councils.

* see www.eastspace.net/hertscf/documents/Final_The_Hidden_Need.pdf
** available from CVSBEH (admin@cvsbeh.org.uk)

**c**) Services

The majority of services and activities provided by voluntary and community sector groups in East Herts to local beneficiaries are varied but often concentrate on social activities, cultural activities, outdoor pursuits and training. They also involve advice, information, befriending and fundraising. This reflects the values and prosperity of the area and the commitment to arts and culture demonstrated through the ‘East Herts Together Community Strategy’ published in 2003, see www.eastherts.gov.uk – search Community Strategy.
d) Resources

i) Financial
30% of the voluntary groups in East Herts that provided us with financial information appear to be well-funded – they do however, often include groups that provide a service across the county, eastern region and in some cases, nationally. However, almost 50% survive on income of less than £5,000 per annum and 20% declared income of less than £1,000 per annum or were completely unfunded. At this point we should bear in mind the assumptions made on page 4 of this report (Survey Results) which indicated that most of the 450+ groups who did not respond will also fall into the low income or unfunded category. We are confident that this means that approximately 10 - 20% of the estimated 1,000 groups active in East Herts receive as much income as the other 80 -90% of groups combined. Therefore the majority of the delivery of services in East Herts is provided by groups with very little income.

No breakdown of the source of groups’ income was available as a result of this survey, as we feel it would have significantly reduced the number of completed survey replies due to the complexity of the funding arrangements of many VCS groups. This is an exercise that the CVS would be interested in pursuing through the setting up of an external funding group for the district of East Herts should other partners be interested in developing this.

Level of Income

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ii) Human
Of 295 groups in East Herts that responded to the question asking about their numbers of paid staff and volunteers, 67 had one or more paid full-time staff; 115 had one or more paid part-time staff; 232 had one or more volunteers working with them and 228 had one or more Management committee members or Trustees. In reaching the figures below, we allowed for a calculation where staff and volunteer figures for the Hertfordshire-wide groups were divided by 10 (districts) and regionally by a further 6.

Total figures were as follows:
- Paid Staff (Full Time) = 254.5*
- Paid Staff (Part Time) = 522.6
- Volunteers & Committee members = 4,622

*not included in this survey: St Elizabeths Centre – 500 pd staff, Haileybury College – 300 pd staff as we felt these groups would give an inaccurate overview of the total numbers of paid staff.

These figures (particularly for groups with paid staff) do not equate across all groups in the district – however if we estimate that our survey attracted responses to this question from 25% of the total number of groups in East Herts, we could make a rough estimate that there are 18,488 active volunteers in East Herts including committee members. Calculating this at an average commitment of 2 hours a week at the minimum wage hourly rate (£5.52) we could further estimate that £204,107.52 of volunteer time is provided to residents of East Herts by volunteers each week. – This is, of course, a very subjective calculation but none the less provides an interesting overview of the value of the sector locally.

**Did you know?**

There are approximately 18,488 active volunteers in East Herts!
CONCLUSION

This is a first attempt at analysing the ‘state of the voluntary and community sector’ in East Herts. We were pleased that our methodology enabled a high return of approximately 30% of those groups targeted and that this gave us an impressive survey sample of 327 groups.

We also recognise that the majority of responses were from groups with the capacity to do so and that therefore much of the hidden information relates to the small unfunded community groups that make up the vast majority of voluntary sector activity in East Herts.

Our main messages from this survey are as follows.

• There are more than 1,000 VCS groups active in the district and this represents the highest number of groups in any district in Hertfordshire
• These groups are spread evenly around the district and most group activity is limited to a single town or parish area.
• East Herts is the least deprived area in Hertfordshire overall, but that, as in most districts in Hertfordshire, its deprivation is most evident in small geographical pockets or ‘super output areas’.
• Our evidence demonstrates that the most common beneficiaries of groups operating in East Herts are children & young people.
• There is a significant lack of local groups representing the growing number of residents of East Herts from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.
• East Herts is well served by community groups providing social and cultural activities, outdoor pursuits, training opportunities, advice, information, befriending and fundraising services.
• The majority of the delivery of services in East Herts is provided by community groups with very little income (less than £1,000 per annum). We estimate that 10 - 20% of the potential 1,000+ active groups receive as much income as the other 80 -90% of groups combined.
• As an employer of paid staff the voluntary and community sector in East Herts has little impact as most groups are entirely volunteer led.
• There are potentially 18,488 active volunteers in East Herts providing potentially £204,107.52 worth of additional value to the district each week.

CVSBEH initial responses to these findings:

1. As a result of our survey we now have the most up to date contact data for as many as 700 voluntary and community groups active in East Herts - and we will endeavour to maintain this.
2. In line with the evidence of individual beneficiaries from VCS groups, there is a need to set up specialist networks for groups working with Children and Young people across the district to enhance information flow, representation and partnership working.
3. The CVS Small Groups Development service is needed to provide more groups representing the district’s BME communities.
4. Support from the CVS in East Herts is essential to the continuation of very high numbers of small unfunded volunteer led community groups which provide the ‘backbone’ of the districts 1,000+ groups.
5. More in depth study is required to fully establish the economic value of the sector in terms of its role as an employer and the true benefit to the community of unpaid volunteer hours.
CVS for Broxbourne and East Herts serves the community

**Training Courses** (often free of charge) aimed at volunteers and paid staff in subjects such as Fundraising, Marketing, Policy Development and Communication Skills.

**Funding Advice** – face-to-face support for your funding applications and promotion of the latest local and national funding sources and information events.

Regular free editions of our **Newsletters and E-Bulletins**, keeping you up-to-date with local initiatives and forthcoming events relevant to the voluntary and community sector.

Signposting to local **Resources**, such as meeting room hire, copying services and equipment loan, building capacity for local community groups.

**Networking Opportunities**, bringing together voluntary groups through regular local forums, helping to build partnerships across the community.

Visit [www.cvsbeh.org.uk](http://www.cvsbeh.org.uk) for more information

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