

Landmark year for SUSTAIN

The last year has been tremendous

for SUSTAIN. We have seen the total transformation of our operations with new staff, a new office, new contracts, new levels of partnership working and considerable success. Looking back, it is staggering what we have achieved.

The year began with the award of a grant from the National Lottery and our appointment as the Local Authority's provider of support services to the borough's Third Sector. Since then it has been a whirlwind of new initiatives.

On the one hand we have been underpinning the development of local voluntary

By Dave Pinwell, SUSTAIN's Chief Executive Officer

and community groups, working to make sure that they have the people, skills, facilities, resources and funds to secure a successful future. On the other, we have been speaking up for our community and its work, lobbying in the places that matter and building fruitful relationships with our partners for the benefit of everyone.

We plan for 2009 to be equally exciting and productive, and one of our primary goals is to establish the Third Sector Network - a new, vibrant and informative rendezvous for all of the borough's voluntary and community organisations. Find out more on page 13.

2009 also looks set to be a challenging year, particularly with the economic uncertainty of the time, and we will be putting a priority on helping local organisations respond to the unfolding needs of our communities. We now offer a range of free support services that any Third Sector organisation, large or small, can take advantage of. You can read more about these between the covers of this newsletter.

We look forward to meeting with many of you at the Third Sector Network, and to working with you over the coming months. **Our best wishes from all the team at SUSTAIN.**



Your team at SUSTAIN

L-R Sara Hands (Projects), Gul Singh (Community Cohesion), Phyllis Bailey (Project Support), Janet Johnson (Funding), Linda Nugent (Finance & HR),

Martin Clarke (Business Advisor), Simon Cockerill (Waterloo Woodwork), Jayne Scarman (PR & Marketing), Bev Doyle (Employment Support), Claire Milican (Sector Development), Sarah Lawrence (Projects), Charles Rapson (Operations), Dawn Brueton (Employment Support), Christian Clarke (Media Designer & IT Support), Dave Pinwell (CEO), Manjit Johal (Community Development)

SUSTAIN - Doing Business



Members of Wood 'n' Tots and the National Grid enjoy the new garden

Just nine months into the job and scores of voluntary organisations across Solihull are already feeling the benefit of increased support from local businesses thanks to SUSTAIN's Martin Clarke.

Since taking up the role of Business Advisor in May, Martin has secured hands-on help with gardening, stacks of office furniture and offers of free meeting space at some of the borough's top hotels.

Children and staff at Smith's Wood Children's Centre were delighted as their overgrown grounds were transformed into a magical woodland playground by the accounts department at National Grid Metering Services.

Susan Harper, manager at the centre's Wood 'n' Tots nursery said: "we never could have achieved all this on our own, the grounds were in such a mess we just didn't know where to start."

Now the children have a safe and exciting place to play, where they can get out and enjoy the great outdoors.

Also enjoying a make-over was Castle Bromwich's cricket and sports pavilion, where a donation of chairs from the NEC group speeded along its much needed renovation.

Martin is now working with local businesses to secure more support for local voluntary groups – everything from professional advice with business planning to more teams of volunteers. Call **0121 711 3148** or email **csr@solihull-sustain.org.uk** for more information.

Martin Clarke is SUSTAIN's Business Advisor



He can help you to find free support from local businesses.

0121 711 3148

csr@solihull-sustain.org.uk

STOP PRESS!

The Ramada Hotel in Solihull has become the latest big name to get involved in SUSTAIN's CSR campaign. The company has offered its facilities to host the Third Sector Network on 9th February, as a contribution to the future success of Solihull's Third Sector.

Want to develop and grow? Four useful things to know

By Manjit Johal, SUSTAiN's Community Development Manager

Becoming a charity

If your organisation has an income of £5000 or more, you might want to consider becoming a charity. Direct.gov has advice on what you need to become a charity, the tax advantages, as well as alternatives.

Go to www.direct.gov.uk and click on 'Homes and community' then 'charities and community groups'. You may also want to take a look at the Charity Commission website – www.charitycommission.gov.uk.

Keep informed

Every two weeks or so, SUSTAiN sends out email alerts with information about the latest funding, contracts, tenders and commissioning opportunities, training, events, consultations, jobs, legal updates and even the odd free fridge, desk and PC.

As Charles Rapson puts it:

"We get lots of information from all over the place which won't wait until we produce a newsletter and post it. Email gives us the ability to get information to you that's hot of the press."

That old saying, "the early bird catches the worm", is very true.

SUSTAiN alerts go to over 500 people directly and at least 200 more indirectly. To get linked in, just email adme@solihull-sustain.org.uk with your name and organisation's name.

Quality assurance

Many voluntary and community groups are becoming more aware that they can improve their service delivery, increase their effectiveness and exceed the expectations of service users and funders.

POASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) is a straightforward, user-friendly quality assurance system that can help you run your organisation more effectively and efficiently.

It guides you through taking a systematic look at what you do, identifying what you do well and where improvements need to be made. It also helps you plan, budget and allocate resources over a realistic time period.

If you want to know more about POASSO and Quality and Performance Management, contact Charles Rapson at SUSTAiN on **0121 770 8889** or charlesr@solihull-sustain.org.uk.

**Manjit Johal is
SUSTAiN's Community
Development Officer**



She can help you develop your organisation and suggests ways in which you could grow.

**0121 711 3148
iag@solihull-sustain.org.uk**

Collaborative working

Ever considered working with a like-minded group? NCVO has some useful guidance on different ways of working with other organisations. From informal networks and alliances, to joint delivery of projects or a full merger, the exchange can benefit both parties as well as end users of both services. Read more at www.ncvo.org.uk.

SUSTAiN promoting you

Does your organisation need to raise its profile but doesn't know where to start? SUSTAiN's PR & Marketing Manager, Jayne Scarman, is here to help.

Offering free advice on everything from designing a leaflet, to writing press releases, to managing an event, Jayne can help you get the most from your promotional activity for real results.

Local voluntary organisation Teen Contact is now providing a fully fledged outreach service to young people in Shirley thanks to the guidance it received.

"SUSTAiN has been supportive since the inception of Teen Contact, providing much advice and practical help", says coordinator Phil Hooper. He continues: "I believe the envisaged success of Teen Contact will owe much to this support."

Also enjoying the benefits of a bit of friendly advice is Elizabeth House residential home, based in Shirley.

Staff at the home approached SUSTAiN looking for a new website, but not really knowing how to go about it. With a little bit of guidance from Jayne, they were able to decide how the website would look, feel and sound - from the site's colours and photographs, to the information for people to read, to even designing a new logo! Then it was over to Colebridge Enterprises to make it all happen.

Deputy Care Manager, Joanne Clarke said: "we are extremely pleased with our new website. It's fantastic, and does a great job of promoting us, thanks to SUSTAiN and Colebridge Trust."

See the finished result for yourself at www.elizabethhousecare.org.uk.

www.elizabethhousecare.org.uk.

**Jayne Scarman
is SUSTAiN's PR &
Marketing Manager**



**She can help you to raise
your profile and get your
message out.**

**0121 711 3148
promotion@solihull-
sustain.org.uk**

Top tips for promoting your group

1 . Know your audience – make sure you know who it is you want to reach. Sounds obvious, but different people respond to different types of communication, so you need to know who you are talking to before you start. The better you know your audience, the better you are able to decide what to say and how to say it.

2 . Be appropriate – an article in a newspaper and a flashy website appeal to different people. Why? Not everyone is the same, and that goes for how we receive information. Once you know who your audience is, you can start choosing the best way of communicating with them.

3 . Less is more – don't be tempted to use every colour and font available. Keep your designs simple and clear (and appropriate for your audience of course).

4 . Be consistent – reinforce your message by having a theme. Make sure your logo, colour scheme, even key words, are on everything you do. People will start recognising them and remembering you.

Getting along just fine?

People tend to look blank when I say the words **community cohesion,**" says **Gulbag Singh, SUSTAIN's Community Cohesion Manager.**

"It basically means sticking together, making sure we understand each other and helping people on the fringes of society get more connected."

"I work directly with the public, both on the telephone and through personal contact. Following Gul's training, I definitely now feel more aware of people's outlooks, religions and feelings, and feel more confident dealing with people from different backgrounds."

Does this matter in Solihull? Well yes, as Gul points out: "there's a general feeling that Solihull's population is far more diverse than statistics suggest, particularly in the daytime, with people travelling into the borough to work, study and shop."

To help groups keep up with these changing demands on their services, Gul is available to give advice, information and guidance

to any Third Sector organisation wanting to know more about making their services more accessible.

He's also looking to raise awareness of equality and diversity across the borough, starting with free awareness training for organisations that would like to do more to engage people from diverse backgrounds.

The session explores faith and culture in Asian communities, and provides best practice for front-line staff dealing with people from these backgrounds. The training is also accompanied by 'Up Rooting' – a booklet based on some of Gul's own experiences.

Says Gul: "my aims to make Solihull's vibrancy its strength; with a greater understanding of our differences, we can move forward

**Gul Singh
is SUSTAIN's
Community
Cohesion Manager**



He can help your group to become more accessible.

0121 711 3148
diversity@solihull-sustain.org.uk

as a more unified community."

For more information about how to make your group more accessible, contact Gul on **0121 711 3148** or email **diversity@solihull-sustain.org.uk**.

Free stuff!

Did you know that all of the advice, information and guidance offered by SUSTAIN is completely free?

Yes, your group can have access to a wealth of expertise on volunteering, funding, promotion, accessibility and much more all for no money whatsoever.

Here's just some of the free stuff you can get from SUSTAIN:

- **Fact sheets**
- **Cultural awareness training**
- **Online advertising of your volunteer vacancies**
- **Help with promotion**
- **Email bulletins**
- **Networking**
- **Expertise from local businesses**
- **Photographs**
- **Information listings about your group on SUSTAIN's website**
- **Articles in the Solihull Times**

Just ask! Call **0121 711 3148**, email **enquiries@solihull-sustain.org.uk** or go to **www.solihull-sustain.org.uk**.

Introducing... Colebridge Trust

By Dave Pinwell, SUSTAiN's Chief Executive Officer

It was Mark Twain who said: 'Rumours of my death are greatly exaggerated'. We know what he meant.

We are told that word has been circulating these last couple of months that 'Colebridge Trust has gone bust'. I can hear you thinking: 'hang on, what has that got to do with SUSTAiN?' Precisely, there has been too much confusion about that – which is why we are now well advanced in tidying it up. Let me explain.

During its brief lifetime, SUSTAiN's work has been led by Colebridge Trust, but has been

governed separately. Whilst Colebridge Trust's work has been governed by its Board of Trustees, a Consortium of partners from Solihull's Third Sector has governed the SUSTAiN work. It was set up that way to satisfy conditions of the Government funded ChangeUp programme.

With constraints gone and with both sets of work being led by the same management team of myself, Charles Rapson, Janet Johnson and Linda Nugent, it was agreed a while back to unify the governance arrangements.

So, without going into tedious details about the legals, we are on a journey of controlled transition.

As I write there is still just one legal entity, 'Colebridge Trust Ltd', still alive and kicking, and delivering a broad and energetic contribution to Third Sector life in the borough. The Board of Trustees now comprises members of both Colebridge Trust and SUSTAiN's original groups of governors.

Where we are going is that there will be ultimately two companies. The first, Solihull SUSTAiN Ltd, will be a registered charity, driving forward our vital sector and community development work. The second, Colebridge Trust Ltd, will be its trading arm, delivering community enterprises on the ground in the borough and ensuring the sustainability of our work.

Why keep both brands? Because both have come to mean something and developed positive reputations – so why spoil a good thing?

Colebridge Enterprises

Colebridge Trust. Here to stay and here to help you. Here's how.

Colebridge Distribution

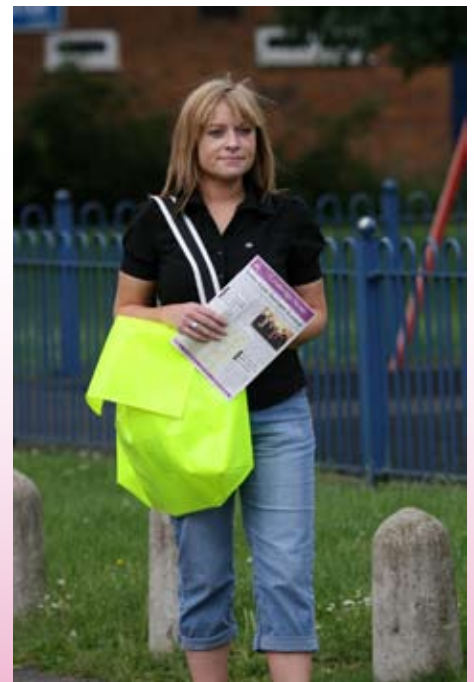
The problem: Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council needed an efficient way of getting their residents' magazine, 'Your Solihull', out to the community in the North of the borough.

The solution: Colebridge distribution service covers the

whole of North Solihull, and now regularly delivers 'Your Solihull' to over 24,000 homes in the area.

It's a great way of getting messages out into the community, and can be used for leaflets, newsletters or other types of promotional campaigns.

The service can be tailored to meet specific geographical requirements - even down to a street-by-street basis - and prices are competitive with second-class mail.



Colebridge Distribution
House-to-house delivery service
T: 0121 770 8889
E: distribution@solihull-sustain.org.uk

Colebridge Web and Media

The problem: Solihull Action through Advocacy was looking for an accessible website that they could keep up-to-date quickly and easily.

The solution: They worked together with Colebridge



Enterprises to design a new site that contained lots of information but was also bright and easy to read.

Norman Mills, office manager at Solihull Action through Advocacy, was delighted with the result:

“Many professionals we work with have commented on how good the site is, in appearance, information and usability.

“From our perspective it is easy to use and saves us

a lot of work by giving instant access to things like referral forms. It also makes us look more professional and gives good messages to potential funders – in fact, thanks to our new website, one local company has adopted us for the year!”

See the website at www.solihulladvocacy.org.uk.

Colebridge Web and Media provides affordable IT, Internet and Media solutions to organisations across Solihull. Get in touch for more information about the full range of services on offer.

Colebridge Web & Media
Websites, leaflets, help with IT, fixing PCs
T: 0121 770 8889
E: webmedia@solihull-sustain.org.uk

Waterloo Woodwork

The problem: Friends of a local park had raised funds for new seating to encourage the local community to spend more time appreciating its natural beauty. They wanted to commission the project from a community-based firm that had its roots firmly in the local area.

The solution: Waterloo Woodwork designed and built a series of hardwearing picnic tables to be installed around the park.

The timber workshop is a training centre for adults with



learning disabilities, that combines work experience with vocational training in literacy, numeracy and IT to equip clients with skills for the workplace.

Nearly all of its projects are for the surrounding community,

which gives the centre's clients a real sense of purpose. As care manager Simon

Cockerill explains: **“seeing something they have made with their own hands bringing real benefit to local people fills us all with immense pride.”**

Waterloo Woodwork specialises in making durable wooden items for both domestic and commercial use. All products can be designed from scratch according to customers' own bespoke requirements.

Waterloo Woodwork
Bespoke wooden items of all sizes,
both domestic or commercial
T: 0121 770 7555
E: simon@waterloowoodwork.co.uk

Spotlight on: SUSTAiN consortium

The SUSTAiN Consortium is a partnership of Third Sector organisations that has come together to drive the development of and give a voice to the Third Sector in Solihull.

The consortium acts as an advisory panel for the work of SUSTAiN and ensures that the Third Sector is represented and consulted on policy and decision making that affects it.



ReCOM

T: 0121 765 5282
E: info@recom.org.uk
W: www.recom.org.uk

ReCOM provides affordable computers and training to charities and individuals in need – bridging the IT gap in the community.

Reconditioned computers - organisations serving people with disabilities and the disadvantaged can apply for professionally refurbished PCs, fully internet-enabled with Windows and Microsoft Office, for just £75 each.

Computer clubs - ReCOM runs clubs across Solihull and Birmingham for anyone over 55 who would like to learn the basics of using a computer. Learn how to email, write a letter or shop online in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



IT can make a difference - computer buddies show how IT can make a real difference by supporting people who are housebound to learn to use a computer in their own homes, opening up opportunities for learning, leisure and independent living.

Access IT - a new scheme to provide computers, internet access and training to low income households and people with disabilities.



Chelmsley Citizens Advice Bureau

Admin number: 0121 779 7607 **Advice Line:** 0870 120 2425

An independent charity that provides free, confidential and impartial advice to people about the problems they face, such as money, benefits, employment and other problems.

The bureau works to make sure that people do not suffer through a lack of knowledge about their rights.

It also campaigns to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.



North Solihull Voluntary & Community Alliance (NSVCA)

T: 0121 770 8590

NSVCA supports and advises new and existing voluntary and community groups in North Solihull, helping them to develop by providing resources and up to date information, improving communications and networking opportunities.

It is a shared voice and meeting space for the

Third Sector in North Solihull, and works to improve the quality of life of local people by offering work experience, volunteering, training and personal development.

Membership of NSVCA is free to all voluntary and community organisations, and gives a say in what the alliance does, including voting at the Annual General Meeting.



Groundwork in Solihull

T: 0121 250 2075

Groundwork in Solihull is an environmental charity based in Smith's Wood, Solihull.

Working in partnership with local people and organisations, it undertakes projects to improve the quality of people's lives, their prospects and potential, and the places where the work, live and play.

Groundwork projects are primarily in the North of the borough, including Kingshurst School Wildlife Project, Holly Lodge Walk and Coleford Drive Improvements in Fordbridge and youth provision at Auckland Hall in Smith's Wood. The charity is also now looking to work on a site in Green Hill Way in South Solihull.

An increasing number of requests from the community and repeat clients who have been satisfied with previous projects has meant the charity has recently expanded, so it can continue to bring about positive changes to the local area.



Family Care Trust

T: 0121 770 1578 **W:** www.familycaretrust.co.uk

The Family Care Trust provides day centres and community support services to people with mental health problems, including learning disabilities and dementia.

It also provides help and support for carers.

The Trust has built up a nationwide reputation for its work, expertise and training and in helping clients to be as independent as possible, with the backing of practical, positive support.



Community Transport

T: 0121 779 5547 **E:** solihull@communitytransport.org

It's amazing how something as simple as transport can improve someone's quality of life, says Solihull Community Transport's David Peplow.

Community Transport helps people without access to a car or public transport by providing low-cost transport solutions using a small fleet of wheelchair-accessible minibuses.

It enables people to keep work or health appointments and helps groups with special needs take part in social and community activities.

For people who find it difficult using conventional transport, the charity plays a vital role in helping to break down the barriers that can prevent them from taking part in their chosen activities.

Over 141 groups are already enjoying the freedom and flexibility that Community Transport's minibuses provide, and the organisation is on course to deliver over 20,000 passenger trips this year.



Solihull Community Foundation

T: 0121 700 3934 **W:** www.solihullcf.org

Solihull Community Foundation (SCF) has been a provider of funding to groups and community projects in Solihull for the last 10 years.

It makes grants on behalf of private funders, larger charities, the Big Lottery, local and national government and from its own resources which are raised within the borough.

As part of its grantmaking, SCF provides outreach

services to help new or developing groups to make applications and to establish basic constitutions and structures to help them progress.

In 2008, SCF was awarded the agency for Grassroots grants which will make grants of £250 - £5000 available to small community groups in Solihull over three years.

In addition, SCF has been challenged with the task of establishing an endowment fund for Solihull which will provide grant income into the future.



Colebridge Trust

T: 0121 770 8889 **E:** info@solihull-sustain.org.uk

W: www.solihull-sustain.org.uk

Colebridge Trust is an independent, not for personal profit social enterprise, operating for the benefit of all who live and work in North Solihull.

Established and managed by a small group of local people, it aims to empower, improve and regenerate local neighbourhoods.

The Trust runs a number of enterprise projects, including web and graphic design, IT support and installations, exhibition and distribution services and a timber workshop. All revenue generated by the projects is plowed back into the Trust's regeneration work.

Read more about Colebridge Trust on page 6.

Feeling the pinch?

By Janet Johnson, SUSTAIN's Funding Manager

Before Christmas, The Times reported that across Britain, charities are being forced to cut both staff and services.

An interim survey of 260 large charities by the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) shows that investments have fallen from £269m to £235m in the past 12 months. One in three organisations expects to lay off staff within months and money held by the Third Sector has decreased by 13% over the past year.

Corporate donations have also fallen by 20%, which coincides with an 18% increase in the demand for services as the voluntary sector is being asked

to support families reeling from unemployment.

50% of charities claim they are now struggling to meet these demands and Chief Executives are calling for an emergency £500m bailout fund from central government to enable them to remain solvent.

So, how can you sustain the services you provide at their current level?

Contact **Phyllis Bailey** at SUSTAIN on **0121 711 3148** or email **phyllisb@solihull-sustain.org.uk** for a copy of one of our funding fact sheets.



Funding fact sheets

1. Taking stock of your organisation

- Starting to trade
- Fundraising
- Funding strategies
- Are you commission-ready?
- Getting the most from your volunteers
- Support from businesses
- Economies of scale
- Partnership working
- Understanding your customers
- Skills and training
- The right people

2. Maximising your income

- Identifying sources of grant income
- Ensuring that you have evidenced project need
- Including statistical and evidence based data
- Points to consider before making your application
- How to complete your application form
- How to increase your chances of being successful

What's in a network?

By Claire Milican, SUSTAiN's Sector Development Manager

Network = a group of people who interact together (Oxford English Dictionary)

Have you ever got talking with someone who shares a passion of yours, and noticed how ideas suddenly start to bubble to the surface? Here at SUSTAiN, we see networks as an important way for groups with a common interest to get connected with each other, to exchange information, share ideas and make contacts. They

can also provide an impetus to start working together. If you would like to get involved in a network that is relevant to you, contact **Claire Milican** at SUSTAiN on **0121 711 3148** or **sectordevelopment@solihull-sustain.org.uk**.



Networks you might be interested in:

Volunteer Management Forum

– open to individuals or organisations of all sizes that rely on volunteers and want to do the best to support them. The Forum is currently looking at the National Occupational Standards for Volunteer Management, a bank of good practice and valuable resources. Contact **Manjit Johal** at SUSTAiN on **0121 711 3148**, email **volunteering@solihull-sustain.org.uk** or go to the SUSTAiN website at **www.solihull-sustain.org.uk** and click on the Volunteer Management Forum link.

Children's Voluntary Sector Forum

– open to all Third Sector organisations that provide services to children and young people in Solihull. The forum aims to keep up to

date with developments and opportunities affecting children's services and comment on consultations affecting local children. It also encourages partnership working, sharing ideas and information and identifying and meeting the needs of its members. Contact **Charles Rapson** at SUSTAiN on **0121 770 8889**, email **charlesr@solihull-sustain.org.uk** or go to the SUSTAiN website at **www.solihull-sustain.org.uk** and click on the Children's Voluntary Sector Forum link.

Not for Profit group

– a network of voluntary organisations involved in health and social care. Members meet monthly to discuss issues and developments and share skills and knowledge. Membership costs £25 per year. Contact **Dave**

Evans or **Karen Powell** at the Family Care Trust on **0121 770 1578** for more information.

Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)

– supports the improvement of health services for everyone. Contact **Paul Dodd** on **0121 678 4854** or go to **www.westmidlandscsip.org.uk**.

Enable Solihull

– (formerly the Disabled People's Network) is an umbrella organisation for disability groups in the Solihull area. Lobbying for positive change and taking an active role in consultations, the network acts as a powerful voice for local people with disabilities. Contact **Martin Wright** on **0121 788 1544** or go to **www.enable-solihull.org.uk** for more details.

Launch of Solihull's Third Sector Network

2009 sees the launch of the Third Sector Network.

So, what is that all about? Well, we want to strengthen the sector in Solihull by getting more people talking, sharing ideas, passing on intelligence, finding out what is out there that can help, building on our goals and developing our vision.

The Network will deal with issues of interest to everyone, with a clear focus on the local community. It is going to combine electronic and printed media, with occasional conferences and interactive workshops. It will be designed to be useful to all voluntary, community and faith groups,

charities, social enterprises and other not-for-profit organisations, large and small.

We want it to be a vibrant and informative rendezvous with something for everyone, a place to make connections and answer the questions that matter, the catalyst for realising opportunities.

Most of all, it will be your network, not ours. SUSTAIN will organise the events and send out the mailings, but you will define the needs, set the agenda and make it effective. We will host it, but it will be your party.

The network launched on



Share ideas

Make new contacts

Find support

Get information

February 9th at the Ramada Hotel, Solihull. Missed it? Sign-up for future events by calling **Phyllis Bailey** at SUSTAIN on **0121 711 3148** or emailing **phyllisb@solihull-sustain.org.uk**.

Commissioning - not just winning contracts

Commissioning only matters to big organisations, right? Wrong.

It is a common mistake to think that commissioning means bidding for a contract. Actually, commissioning describes an entire process from assessing what local people need to running a service to meet it.

'Commissioning' is your opportunity to really get involved in shaping the support that is available to people in your

area. You can have your say in what is needed, and you can also do something about it – by helping to create strategies and by putting forward proposals for services your organisation could deliver.

**Commissioning is your
opportunity to really
shape support for
people in your area**

Current government policy is pushing for more Third Sector organisations to be running

public services. It recognises how in touch community groups are with local people, meaning that they can reach out to people the government can't get close to. It also realises that the Third Sector can offer flexible, new approaches to old problems, which can really make a difference to people's lives

Look out for SUSTAIN's series of linked training sessions that will help you familiarise yourself with local commissioners and the opportunities that are available, as well as offering some practical, down-to-earth advice on making the most of commissioning, so that you can be at the forefront of the future of the Third Sector.

Howdy partner!



By Dave Pinwell, SUSTAiN's Chief Executive Officer

We get the impression that some folks are finding it hard to grasp what the Solihull Partnership is all about.

There are all sorts of misconceptions, one of which is that it is a new arm of the

Council. In reality, it is quite simple, 25 parties have agreed to work together on the big stuff, the things that are really important for the future of the people of our Borough. We, Solihull's Third Sector, are one of them.

Partners in the Partnership include the Council, Care Trust, Police, Fire Service, Learning and Skills Council, Solihull College, Job Centre Plus and the Faith Forum. The Private Sector is represented via the Chamber of Commerce.

Now let's think about just one of the key priorities for our Borough – to get more young people engaged in positive activities. For every one youngster that finds something worthwhile and interesting to do in their spare time, that is one more not loitering around with others and getting closer to the downward spiral that leads towards anti-social behaviour and drug misuse.

Do we leave it to the Council to make it happen? Or would we be more successful if the Police and the Fire Service are engaging with youngsters in positive ways at every opportunity, if those concerned with skills and careers are



Partnership working in action: (L-R), Melanie Lockey (Solihull Partnership), David Mattocks (Third Sector Network), and Nick Drew (Commission for the Compact)

getting to young people early and developing their aspirations and if we in the Third Sector are creating fun and rewarding ways to volunteer.

The Third Sector is increasingly recognised as having a vital role in the Partnership because we are the representatives of the community on the ground. We know where the priorities, problems and opportunities are. We can inform the work of the Partnership with clarity as well as participating in its delivery. For this reason, connecting the Sector with the activities of the Partnership will be a key part of the new Third Sector Network. The goal is to provide a framework where the sector's representatives can be informed by you all and feed back to you, making the strongest possible connection between the work of our Sector and that of the Solihull Partnership.

Third Sector representatives to the Solihull Partnership:

Governing Board:
David Mattocks (Chair, Third Sector Network) and **Dave Pinwell** (CEO, SUSTAiN)

Healthier Communities Strategic Group:
Martin Wright (Chief Officer, Enable Solihull)

Safer Communities Strategic Group:
Joanne Mackinnon (Chief Officer, Welcome)

Stronger Communities Strategic Group:
Dave Pinwell (CEO, SUSTAiN)

Prosperous Communities Strategic Group:
Janet Johnson (Funding Manager, SUSTAiN)

Adult Safeguarding Board:
Anne Hastings (Chief Officer, Age Concern) and **Maggie Leaver** (Chief Officer, Solihull Carers)

Volunteering. We can Do-It!

SUSTAiN is now advertising all volunteer vacancies through the Do-It website and database.

And it's highly successful way of recruiting volunteers online. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Fill in a short registration form for your organisation. Go to www.solihull-sustain.org.uk and click on Volunteer Management Forum. Paper copies are also available from Manjit Johal at SUSTAiN on 0121 711 3148.

2. Fill in the volunteering opportunity form each time you have a vacancy – forms available from the same place.

3. Your vacancy is now advertised – sit back and wait for potential volunteers to get in touch with you.

4. Tell us when your vacancy has been filled. Please remember to do this so we can remove it from the website. Contact Manjit on 0121 711 3148 or volunteering@solihull-sustain.org.uk.



Some of the Volunteer Management Forum recruiting new volunteers

Surviving the credit crunch

What happens to the Third Sector in an economic downturn? Well, history has shown that the strong get stronger while the rest try not to get left behind.

During the last recession, the income of small groups was found to have fallen, while that of larger charities simply grew more slowly. Charitable giving does not necessarily decrease during an economic downturn, but there is evidence to suggest that people tend to focus their donations – supporting causes they already have an affiliation with. Corporate sponsorship has already dropped, as has income from investments and legacies.

The fallout from this is that larger organisations are usually better equipped to cushion the

blow of a fall in income, while smaller ones find themselves increasingly squeezed.

It's not all bad news though. Costs such as accommodation or advertising may decrease. And rising unemployment could mean more people with the right skills looking for work, as well as growing numbers seeking to gain experience through volunteering. Those groups with trading arms may also benefit, as more people turn to using charity shops to reduce costs.

Demand for Third Sector services is already growing in the areas of welfare advice on debt, housing or employment. But on the other hand, groups offering luxuries such as leisure and cultural activities, even ethical products, may find a noticeable drop in demand.



So the current economic crisis presents a real mixture of fortunes for Third Sector organisations. But what all groups will need to survive is a clear plan for the future, to look realistically at what may lie ahead and develop tactics to negotiate it. Now is a good time to be talking to SUSTAiN, and using the services we provide.

Find out more on our website at www.solihull-sustain.org.uk or get in touch on 0121 711 3148.

Help us, help you, help Solihull

By Charles Rapson, SUSTAiN's Operations Manager

It is widely thought that Solihull's Third Sector has suffered from under investment for at least two decades when compared with other parts of the UK.

Solihull is perceived to be a rich town that does not need as much investment as other areas. This means we have to shout louder than most to get our fair share.

The contribution that the Third Sector makes to communities across the borough is undoubtedly vast. But no-one knows how vast, as it has never really been measured.

We are entering a recession that many believe will be the worst for generations. A time when the demand for services is at its highest, competition for funds is at its fiercest and when

money is at its scarcest.

So SUSTAiN needs to be shouting even louder than ever for our fair share and that means facts. Hard evidence of need. Concrete proof of value. Hence the SUSTAiN Census.

The Census asks lots of detailed questions but every question has a purpose. Every charity, voluntary organisation, community group, faith group and 'not for profit' organisation is being asked to contribute.

The response will not only help individual organisations but will help every organisation. Don't let the side down. Complete your Census form and return it to SUSTAiN. For more information, go to www.solihull-sustain.org.uk, email census@solihull-sustain.org.uk or call **0121 770 8889** for a form.

Why should I fill in my census form?

1. People can find out about you more easily - you get an enhanced listing in SUSTAiN's Third Sector Directory with full contact details and a description of your services.

2. You can get extra help and support - completing your census form helps SUSTAiN identify areas where we can offer you dedicated support from our specialist advisors.

3. We can let the world know what a great job you are doing - if we know more about you, we can spread the word about how fantastic you are, from funders and supporters, to volunteers and decision-makers, even local newspapers. Which will all help you be even more successful than you already are.



Solihull Carers fill in their census form