

WBC Voluntary Sector Strategy Report

W3RT preliminary observations / responses to recommendations

Recommendation	W3RT Update Oct 2022	Status
Post Covid Recovery and Renewal		
<p>1. Review the Watford Helps triage and referral processes, to clarify the complementary roles of all signposting/social prescribing bodies, i.e. Watford Helps, HertsHelp, the W3RT Wellbeing Hub, Watford’s Healthy Hub, HCNS, Watford Together, Neighbours Together, etc.</p>	<p>Agreed, we regularly review and monitor triaging and referrals and W3RT staff are clear on processes.</p> <p>W3RT has a new referral link on its website for Health and Wellbeing activities and a new database to manage its H&W services, Elemental, which provides data on referral source from its online referral form: https://sites.elementalsoftware.co.uk/app/WeCEObjects/ES-QA.woa/cms/watford_trust_registerstart</p> <p>People can be referred to the project through the H&W referral link also through the tailored Staying Connected project webpages and Digital Inclusion specific form.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>2. Ensure that partners at Hertfordshire County Council-commissioned service HertsHelp have accessible local information to support Watford residents effectively, and ease local services.</p>	<p>W3RT will make sure that its website and future newsletters direct people to the portal to add their information (Request Login Hertfordshire MarketPlace) and that it offers help to any group facing difficulties.</p> <p>It has promoted the HertsHelp portal and has held discussions with HertsHelp to ensure they have good data on Watford groups. They will continue to monitor HCNS and other referrals.</p> <p>They are also launching their own list of local services through Nation Builder and encouraging groups to promote there as well. Thought needs to be given to ensuring they have a clear call to action for local groups around listing their services across multiple platforms.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>

<p>3. Consider how to work towards a long-term town-wide strategic approach to respond specifically to issues of social isolation and mental health in the community.</p>	<p>They are resuming meetings of the Watford and Three Rivers Health and Wellbeing Forum, holding regular discussions with the WBC Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing and the Head of Community Protection team. They are also holding monthly meetings with Watford Chamber and other key local groups to align thinking on mental health locally, and have offered to assist and promote the Mental Health steering group discussed at a recent One Watford meeting.</p> <p>W3RT Neighbours Together team have been instrumental in delivering the Watford Pensioner’s Forum to improve awareness among older people and circulating their What’s on Guide. They are also exploring digital version for their What’s on Guide in future.</p> <p>W3RT is an active member of HertsHelp, the Hospital and Community Navigation Service, and Community Help Herts. They have secured funding for the Waiting Well project (supporting people awaiting treatment at Watford General Hospital) and will soon learn about future funding for Getting Together.</p> <p>A member of the W3RT Community Development team is involved with the Dementia Forum and local initiatives and exploring fundraising to support this initiative as well. W3RT staff have previously undertaken dementia awareness training and will conduct a review to see if new staff need further training.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>4. Build on best practice in the VCS to tackle digital isolation as part of the Council’s Road to Renewal plan.</p>	<p>W3RT has members on each of the working and steering groups for the “Staying Connected” project, which is going well so far.</p> <p>As of Dec 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 beneficiaries referred into the project, 4 completed, 6 outstanding • 7 fully registered volunteers, one more awaiting DBS check • 6 tablets ready to hand out, 3 ready to take over to be wiped <p>They continue to liaise with multiple local groups including Atria about device recycling points and have renewed their comms plan for this project and their CVS Lead has regular meetings with the Head of Customer Service at WBC to coordinate device drop offs through WBC. They are also liaising with other local groups with beneficiaries in need such as CAB, WBC Pensioner’s Forum, W3RT Getting Together groups.</p> <p>People can be referred to the project through the H&W referral link (as above, section 1) and also through the tailored Staying Connected project webpages and Digital Inclusion specific form.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>

<p>5. Work with W3RT to create and share accessibly a collection of case studies with innovations and best practices, developed in response to Covid-19, from the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p>	<p>W3RT staff regularly capture case studies across their services and this is now embedded into all colleagues objectives as part of their new behaviours, which includes ‘impact’ to measure and demonstrate our impact.</p> <p>W3RT CVS have captured quotations and stories of success through their State of the Sector Survey in April 2022 and further case studies on Community Fund recipients which were presented to the Mayor of Watford at their Community Funds celebration event in June 2022.</p> <p>Following their Corporate Volunteering event in October 2022 in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, they are also producing 2 case studies on successful local corporate partnerships to inspire local voluntary organisations and businesses.</p> <p>W3RT now hosts quarterly fundraising networks and quarterly volunteering networks, where case studies and best practice in capturing them is shared among staff and volunteers in local organisations. As always, W3RT CVS is happy to share template documents with groups and these are available on request.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>Engaging Volunteers</p>		
<p>6. Review the Team Herts volunteer brokerage system, to clarify the complementary roles of all volunteering services which Watford residents might access, including TeamHertsVolunteering, do-it.org and W3RT.</p>	<p>W3RT CVS continues to work closely with Team Herts volunteering and direct organisations and individuals towards them where activities fall outside of Watford and Three Rivers area or are Hertfordshire wide. Likewise, TH refer back to W3RT CVS enquiries for local opportunities.</p> <p>Head of Community Development has engaged with Team Herts to outline their new volunteer platform, Golden Volunteer and they have made us aware of their new recruitment platform ‘GoVolHerts’. W3RT CVS have proactively sought consensus on how it can each share clear messages on the purpose of these two different systems and outlined the enhanced functionality of Golden Volunteer for management of volunteers.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>7. Ensure that partners at Hertfordshire County Council-commissioned service TeamHerts Volunteering have accessible local information to efficiently help Watford residents, and ease local services.</p>	<p>As above, W3RT CVS is in regular, positive communication with Team Herts volunteering and will continue this throughout 2022.</p> <p>A member of THV spoke at the W3RT CVS Annual Conference in November 2021, including figures on volunteering in Watford during the pandemic. Slides available on request.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>

<p>8. Ensure that there is a formal process for volunteer referrals to organisations to ensure both skills and motivations are considered, and that engagement information is captured.</p>	<p>This will be managed by the new Golden Volunteer online volunteer recruitment and management system that W3RT and local charities can benefit from using.</p> <p>Following successful workshops in December 2021 and January 2022 on the new system, they will also be engaging with local charities at their Volunteering Network meeting at the end of January to gather feedback on those using the system.</p> <p>They currently have 250 volunteers registered (including W3RT volunteers) with 84 new volunteers joining. They will be proactively promoting Golden Volunteer to the wider public during January and February to ensure take up from a wide range of local people with different time and skills to offer.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>9. Coordinate approaches for the recognition of volunteers by the Council and other partners in the community.</p>	<p>They were delighted to welcome so many Council their our June Volunteers' Week volunteering fair hosted at Watford Palace Theatre, and also at their October Corporate Volunteering event.</p> <p>They held a meeting with Deputy Mayor Cllr Dychton at the Holywell Centre to discuss wider initiatives and data insights available using the new Golden Volunteer platform.</p> <p>They look forward to developing this work further in the coming month and year ahead to meet community needs.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>10. Build on the response to the Covid-19 crisis as a basis to change attitudes to support the most vulnerable in society, by building opportunities for professional development and long-term volunteering such as trusteeship.</p>	<p>W3RT CVS is working closely with West Herts College to promote local volunteering opportunities to students to develop their transferable skills. In addition, they are promoting 6-month industry placements for students among local charitable groups.</p> <p>They are developing a co-ordinated approach to promote trusteeship roles via local organisations especially for younger candidates and those from BAME communities. They have monthly calls with Watford Chamber and can raise professional volunteering and trusteeship with them during the year.</p> <p>Their Digital Inclusion 'Staying Connected' and their Neighbours Together Community Champions volunteering roles offer opportunities for skills development for local people and long term roles.</p> <p>W3RT CVS is working with Team Herts volunteering and other CVSs across Hertfordshire on preparations for Trustees Week in November 2022.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>Diversifying funding</p>		

<p>11. Review the Watford Helps Community Fund, to clarify its role in relation to similar funds, such as HCF's Coronavirus Relief Fund and WCH's Community Development Fund.</p>	<p>The fund is administered by W3RT with grant awards being agreed with WBC. There are 3 'anchor' fund raising events during the year, plus some additional events during the year.</p> <p>W3RT has clarified its stance with the Council around its role in delivering the fundraising events that they will focus more on the distribution of funds moving forward.</p> <p>They look forward to working with the Council to release the funds already raised to support cost of living initiatives.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>12. Ensure that the administration of a revised Community Fund is done as collaboratively and transparently as possible. Consider support from a range of partners on this such as Hertfordshire Community Foundation.</p>	<p>W3RT continues to work closely with WCF, and engages in discussions with the new local funders group.</p> <p>They have launched a new W3RT Community Funds webpage to improve transparency and access to information on all aspects of funds they manage. All information on funds, eligibility and application process for Additional Restrictions Grants, Health Protection Board funds and others across Watford and Three Rivers area can be found on these W3RT Community Funds pages.</p> <p>Contactless pay point is in position in Metro Bank collecting donations for Community Funds to support Watford-based groups. To date it has raised £63 during phase one of the two year project (Dec 2020 – May 2021)</p> <p>There is now another contactless pay point at the Central Leisure Centre to raise funds related to the WBC anti-begging homelessness campaign.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>13. Consider aligning Community Fund grants more closely to strategic priorities.</p>	<p>See point 11 above</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>14. Consider allocating part of the Community Fund to projects lasting more than 12 months.</p>	<p>See point 11 above. W3RT CVS welcome funding for longer term projects to provide sustainable support for local organisations.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>15. Align reporting schedules of all Watford Borough Council 'Business-As-Usual' expenditure with the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure strategic priorities are considered.</p>	<p>W3RT CVS believe this is currently happening, but are open to discussions with the Council on any areas for further exploration.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>

16. Consider a full-time fundraising post, to support the Community Fund and VCS groups through the CVS.	See point 11 above.	Complete
17. Consider how to explicitly support the Voluntary and Community Sector to build financial resilience and diversify income streams alongside traditional fundraising.	<p>W3RT CVS continues to offer support on business planning and fundraising strategies and access to the Herts Funding Database. With partners, they are planning 4 fundraising network events this year including a fundraising fair.</p> <p>They have also delivered a successful fundraising campaign for Homestart through our new fundraising platform Nation Builder for WBC Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Walk in the Park for Homestart. This demonstrates future fundraising potential for local groups in addition to our wider offering.</p>	Completed in February report
Information sharing		
18. Review the Watford Helps networks, clarifying the roles of groups such as the Mayor's Volunteering Planning Group in line with the One Watford review. Ensure that there is scope across Watford for VCS leaders to input to both operational and strategic discussions and decision-making.	<p>W3RT CVS Lead and Head of Community Development have regularly attended all relevant groups in 2021 and 2022. They have regularly attended the cost of living response groups as well to support coordination and collaboration to tackle growing challenges in this area and are committed to doing so as long as is required in addition to BAU activities.</p>	Complete
19. Review principles of CVS approach so as to minimise any possible conflicts of interest between W3RT's support to its members and its role as a service delivery organisation.	<p>The report highlights some concerns expressed. W3RT CVS are open to further discussions in this area and responding positively to demonstrate transparency and offer reassurance.</p>	Completed in February report

<p>20. Review the CVS staffing role at W3RT to ensure more WBC input with regards to strategic and operational responsibilities, with the aim to encourage long-term staff who can build up strong local knowledge and relationships.</p>	<p>W3RT CVS Lead is a local resident and active volunteer and meets several times each week with teams across WBC. The Community Funds Coordinator is also a local resident with strong connections across the local charity and corporate sector.</p> <p>New Head of Community Development role was appointed and joined in June 2021 and is attending regular strategic meetings with WBC. Any feedback on how these roles are meeting this recommendation would be gratefully received by W3RT CVS.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>
<p>21. Consider how to support VCS with collection, analysis and data sharing on changing needs across Watford, as part of wider approach by WBC and statutory partners.</p>	<p>In the last year, W3RT has implemented 2 new digital platforms to capture more information on volunteering and fundraising locally. This has been shared in the regular quarterly CVS reports to the Council.</p> <p>They are still awaiting census information and W3RT looks forward to working with the Council to identify areas of need or development relevant to the VCS sector locally.</p> <p>One of their new organisational behaviours is 'impact' so they are embedding this into their quarterly volunteering and quarterly fundraising sessions to ensure they demonstrate the value of good data to VCS to help secure funds. For example, in the spring fundraising network, they shared examples from funding applications they had received with local groups to encourage them to measure reach, impact, outputs and outcomes and include in funding applications.</p> <p>W3RT CVS shared statistics with the Council from VCS groups Watford Citizens Advice and Watford Foodbank to demonstrate the impact on their services. E.g. reduction in donations of 30% and increase of use on CA services relating to energy costs and cost of living. They will continue to gather insights and share with the Council to help inform future planning.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>22. Consider the groupings and “themes” used to categorise VCS organisations as a means to link new and emerging groups to those with similar aims</p>	<p>W3RT CVS regularly links new groups to more established groups, and the new Community Directory on Nation Builder and system data will assist with establishing and supporting thematic networks.</p> <p>W3RT CVSs existing sector knowledge, supported by data from their new systems will help them to identify groups supporting underrepresented causes and/or communities locally.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>

<p>23. Refresh the CVS’ KPIs on actively engaging with business so as to lay out explicit plans on how to share knowledge and skills between local businesses and the VCS (noting that businesses can also learn from charities).</p>	<p>W3RT CVS holds collaborative monthly meetings with Watford Chamber of Commerce to share initiatives and facilitate communication. One member of the Community Development team also regularly attends Chamber events and Watford Football Club to share their initiatives and maintain positive connections with the business community.</p> <p>They co-hosted a successful corporate volunteering and partnerships event on Tuesday 26th October in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. At least 10 businesses and 20 charities were represented at the event and they will gather case studies in the coming weeks to find out more examples of the impact. They hope to run these twice a year moving forward.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>24. Work with W3RT to create a proactive action plan to better engage with all parts of the Voluntary and Community Sector, particularly those that support underrepresented communities including those from BAME communities and those smaller groups that may not have their own physical spaces.</p>	<p>Activities to date:</p> <p>The Head of Community Development is exploring their approach to equality, diversity and inclusion locally. They have strong connections across the local sector in relation to older people and disability groups and are keen to proactively engage more with underrepresented groups.</p> <p>To better engage with disabled people locally, W3RT Community Development Team facilitated an in-person meeting between Watford Deaf Club and staff from West Herts NHS Trust Hospitals to discuss accessibility in autumn 2021. As a result the “<i>Let Me Hear You, Let Me See You</i>” Forum meetings have been reintroduced focusing on access for individuals with sensory disabilities. The forum consists of Lead nurse for Patient Experience, Audiology Manager, CEO Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service, Chair of Disability Watford, Disability Panel representatives, Disability Champion, GP Liaison and Freedom of Information Manager, PALS Manager, Trustee at CAB- Patients Panel and Secretary for Corporate Nursing.</p> <p>W3RT is part of this proactive forum to ensure that the local deaf community and those with other sensory disabilities have equal access to health services. They are also attending regular meetings with the Sensory team at Herts County Council to learn more about County-wide initiatives that may benefit Watford communities.</p> <p>In September 2022 W3RT CVS facilitated a feedback session with Watford Deaf Club and NHS at Watford General Hospital where Deaf and hearing impaired people were able to give feedback on new sensory support equipment in boxes on the wards.</p>	<p>Completed in February report</p>