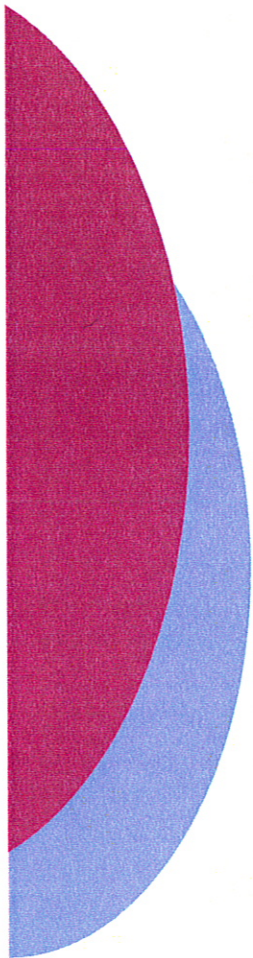




## Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service

### Rural Refresh Project South Cambridgeshire Report

March 2009



## Rural Refresh Project, South Cambridgeshire Report 2009

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### **1. Executive Summary**

The Rural Refresh Project was a successful exercise in contacting small community groups in South Cambridgeshire, verifying their contact details and finding out what their support needs might be. Every community and voluntary group that CCVS had contact details for was communicated with between October 2008 and February 2009. Successful contact was made with 84% of the 206 member groups. Six had closed down, but 97% of those that replied renewed their membership and updated their contact details. There remained 35 groups that proved impossible to follow up, which may have closed down or changed their contact details so much that they cannot currently be tracked. The subsequent CCVS Need Analysis Survey that was sent to South Cambridgeshire groups using the newly refreshed contact details highlighted two areas for CCVS to provide events and training in 2009-2010; namely a workshop on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and another session on recruiting, keeping and replacing volunteers.

### **2. Background**

The purpose of this project was to consolidate the contacts list for community and voluntary groups in South Cambridgeshire in order to register each contact for some level of CCVS service, and enable a stronger community engagement network to be formed. This included groups that took part in the Neighbourhoods and Networks project (N&NP) that CCVS ran in 2007-8 which introduced about 150 individuals to each other from South Cambridgeshire Community and Voluntary groups.

When CCVS undertook a similar survey in 2004 it was just to establish which community groups in South Cambridgeshire wanted to be advertised in the CCVS Directory of Voluntary groups. About 200 new groups were registered at that time to have their details listed in the Directory. Since then apart from this service some have engaged in other CCVS services, whilst others had made no contact at all. The Rural Refresh Project 2008-9 contacted all South Cambridgeshire community and voluntary groups that it had contact details for.

The **objectives** of the project were to:

1. Check contact details for groups are correct
2. Register contacts for at least one CCVS service
3. Collate service request needs in order to plan S Cambs networks programme for 2009 -2010

### **3. Project Methodology**

CCVS contacted South Cambridgeshire groups initially by letter in order to establish whether the contact details were correct and then to find out what level of CCVS service they required. After this was done another survey (CCVS 2009 Needs Analysis) was conducted which investigated specially what sort of CCVS service the groups would be interested in CCVS providing for them in 2009-2010.

CCVS clearly set out in the letter the levels of membership services that are available, which are free and which are chargeable at different levels of membership (see copy of letter attached).

In addition CCVS followed organisations by telephone if no response was forthcoming by post. CCVS provides a gatekeeper role for groups that do not wish to have their personal contact details broadcast but wish to keep up to date with relevant issues using CCVS as intermediary between statutory and other agencies.

CCVS 2009 Needs Analysis was carried out in February 2009 and the results of the analysis have acted as the basis for designing South Cambridgeshire events & training in 2009-2010.

### **4. Membership survey results**

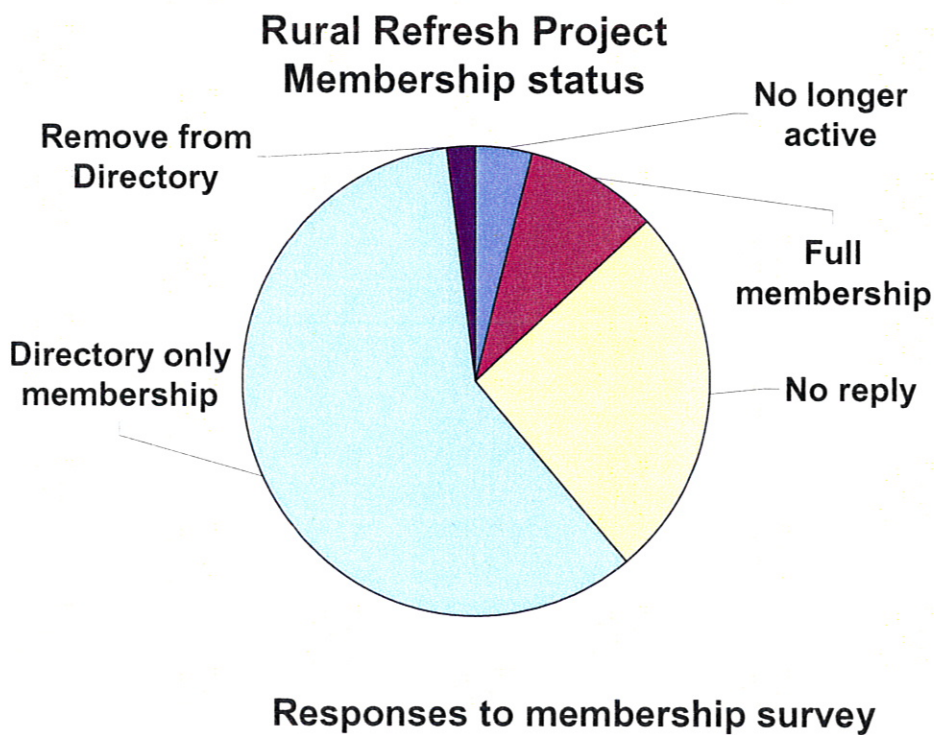
CCVS sent out 206 letters to South Cambridgeshire organisations requesting confirmation of their contact details. CCVS received 172 responses, 137 requested directory only membership, 23 requested full membership with directory entry, one requested full membership without entry in the directory, five groups asked not to be in the directory and 6 had either closed down/discontinued their phone line or been taken over.

Following telephone calls to organisations that had not responded to the initial letter it became clear that some organisations had closed down or had a discontinued telephone number. There are still some 35 remaining organisations where contact

details are not available or have discontinued numbers. Some of the remaining 35 still exist but have not responded to messages left. These 35 remaining organisations will be followed up at a later date.

The majority of contact details from the N&NP were updated as a result of the project. Those organisations that requested full membership have been sent membership forms. Eight application forms have been received and became full members of CCVS at the Executive meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

| <b>Rural Refresh Project: Responses to membership survey</b> |  |                                  |                      |   |
|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Request to remove from Directory</b>                      | <b>Full membership requests (8 now full members)</b> | <b>Directory only membership</b> | <b>Did not reply</b> | <b>No longer active/unable to contact</b> |
| 5  | 23   | 137                              | 35                   | 6   |



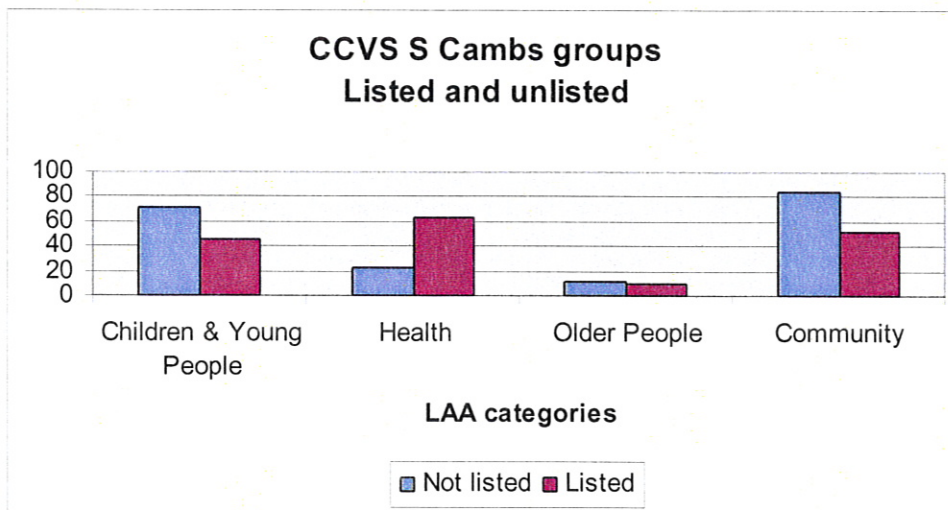
## 5. Discussion

One of the main factors affecting the number of responses to the initial letter was the lack of continuity of contact details for voluntary and community groups. CCVS had then to make other inquiries to establish:

- Whether the organisation still existed;
- What were the current contact names and addresses
- Whether the organisation had been taken over by another voluntary organisation

There is still a need coming from community groups for help and support and this has been highlighted in the number of organisations requesting full membership. There were also organisations that did not understand what the CCVS could offer, but once this was explained they requested further information. Some organisations are confused with the term “voluntary or community organisation” and they do not feel they belong in this category. How small organisations perceive themselves is how CCVS needs to phrase communications with them in future for maximum impact.

There are still a considerable number of groups for which CCVS has contact details for but are not members and not listed on the CCVS Directory, in fact as many as member groups. For future consultations with community groups in South Cambridgeshire this needs to be taken into consideration. A comparison of the numbers of listed and unlisted groups by Local Area Agreement categories shows this well:

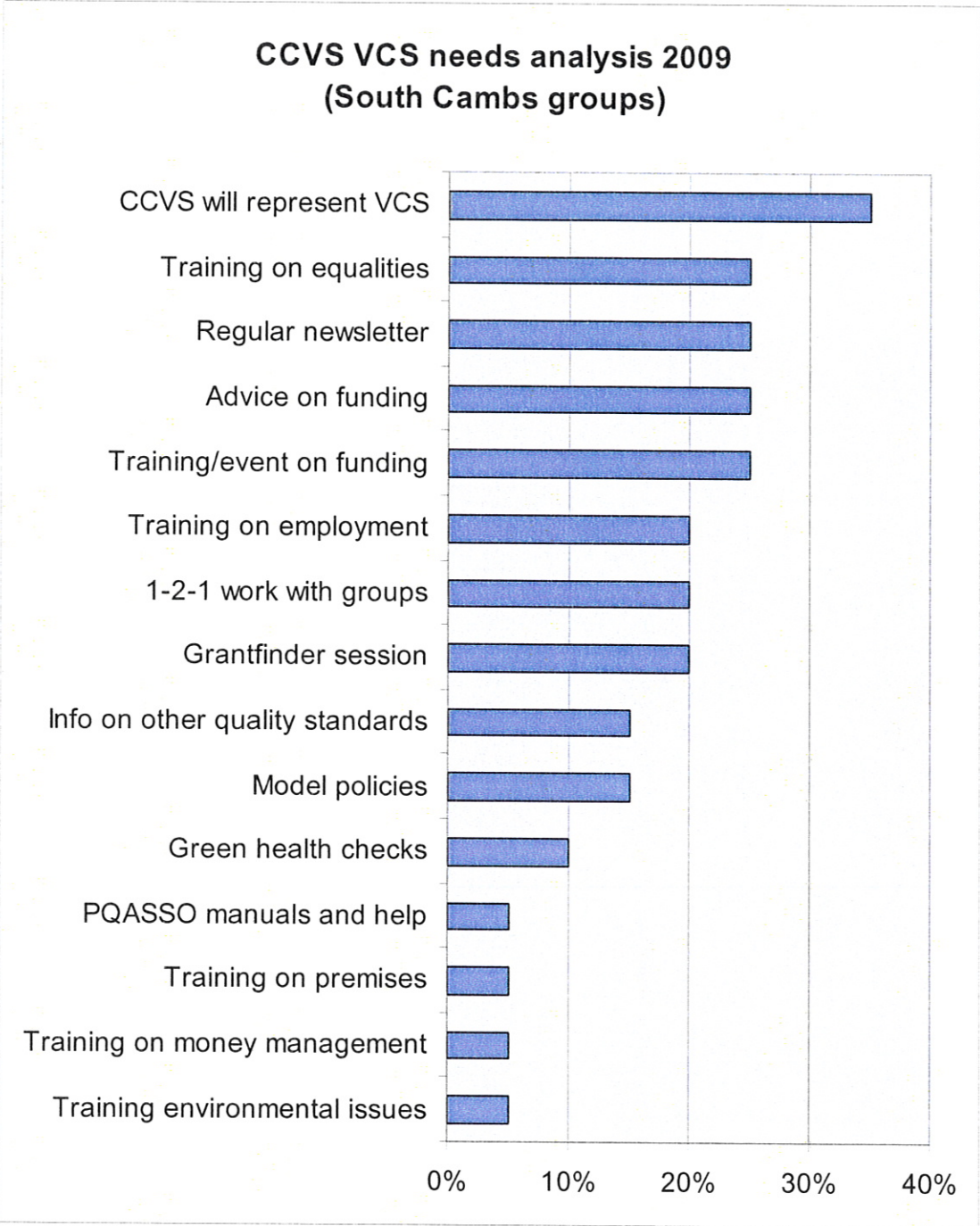


## 6. Needs Analysis Results

CCVS 2009 Needs Analysis was carried out in February 2009. Of the category of service that were on offer to groups most wanted CCVS to represent them on local statutory partnerships, not only to ensure that accessible funding is available but to keep up to date with local issues effecting community groups.


Next most requested service was for equalities training. Issues such as child protection and vulnerable adult policies come under this heading. Added comments frequently requested events that keep groups up-to-date on keeping within the law, especially in the areas of employment and anti-discrimination.

Advice on funding and information on 'little bits of money' was also high on the list of needs for South Cambridgeshire groups.

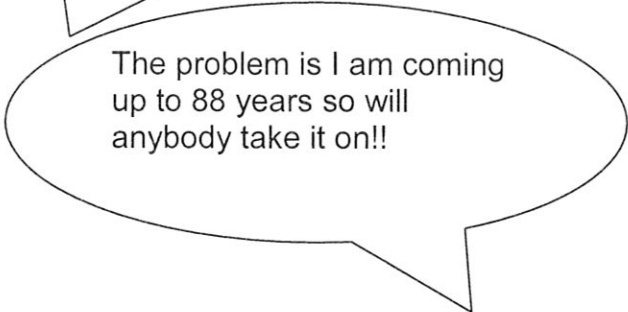


Equally important was the informal feedback received from the survey which raised issues about publicity, succession planning and recruiting new members. The value of the CCVS newsletter rated moderately highly with the groups that responded. Comments included


## Informal comments received



We would like advice on how to improve our publicity efforts



The problem is I am coming up to 88 years so will anybody take it on!!



Help with recruiting new members is always welcome

### 7. Summary and Actions

This project highlighted a number of issues for CCVS to address in order to support South Cambridgeshire voluntary and community groups.

The fact that 23 members upgraded their membership as a result of the consultation because they wanted more regular contact and more services justified the expense of the project.

Some groups were not fully aware of the support CCVS has on offer. Clearly CCVS will have to improve communications to address this. This could take the form of customised publicity material or networking events.

The CCVS Needs Analysis 2009 helped prioritise the subject areas for the two events or training that CCVS is contracted to deliver for South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2009-2010.

#### Actions

The CCVS Needs Analysis 2009 highlighted two areas that groups would like to have addressed in 2009-2010: Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2009 and another session in October or November on recruiting, keeping and replacing volunteers in order to keep the group going.

#### Further actions

- CCVS to continue to represent groups on local statutory partnerships
- Producing user-friendly relevant content for smaller groups could lead to further upgrades in membership
- Consultations with community and voluntary groups can have a wider reach than those listed in the CCVS Directory, only if the consultation is managed through CCVS itself