All Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering

Small Charities – 20 January 2015

Speakers:

- Pauline Broomhead – CEO, Foundation for Social Improvement
- Nigel Scott-Dickeson – CEO, The Springboard Project
- Simon Hebditch – Chair, Small Charities Coalition
- Yvonne Farquharson - Managing Director, Breathe Arts Health Research

Pauline Broomhead – CEO, Foundation for Social Improvement

- FSI deliver over £2.2 million of free capacity building support to our 3,720 small charity members
- In terms of looking at challenges facing small charities, drawing on the ‘Missing Pieces’ research. All charities involved in this research have an annual income of under £1.5 million
- Key points:
  1. One impact of the reduction in local authority funding has been an upsurge in demand for their services
    - This demand has increased financial pressure on the charities, although confidence in small charities remains high.
  2. This increase in demand is hampered by staff reductions due to reduced incomes
    - The result of increased demand and fewer staff has led to greater workload
    - Staff have less time to focus on delivery and need to spend much time securing income.
    - Many charities are looking to collaborate with bigger charities but building these relationships takes time
  3. Another key area of concern has been cashflow as there has been a real flat-lining of income
  4. A further challenge has been how to be resilient and build sustainable organisations.
    - Many very small charities, those with an annual turnover of less than £250,000, feel can’t even consider bidding for a public service contract, don’t have the resources to go through the commission process
    - Many small charities are reluctant to become reliant on a public services contract as have become unpredictable

Nigel Scott-Dickeson – CEO, The Springboard Project

- The Springboard Project works with children with disabilities
- Recent challenges they are facing:
  1. Changes in the funding landscape have really affected them. There is now no such thing as a single, reliable income, have to take from smaller sources, which makes income unpredictable and makes it harder to plan.
  2. Tendering has become a lot more complex
  3. They want to see a move from the statutory sector viewing small charities as cheap, they are rather, extremely good value for money
  4. The Children’s and Families Act has put greater responsibility on families, which some find very difficult. It also hosts much of its information online only and not everyone is as proficient with receiving information that way.

Simon Hebditch – Chair, Small Charities Coalition

- The Small Charities Coalition has over 7,000 members
- Recent challenges they are facing:
  1. Feel there is a need for investment in infrastructure and co-ordinating organisations
2. Would like greater access to fundraising skills, how to fundraise, how to get support at local or institutional level for small charities
3. Small charities need access to skills and training

Yvonne Farquharson - Managing Director, Breathe Arts Health Research

Breathe Arts
- Breathe Arts work with the NHS to design healthcare programmes. They ground everything in scientific research
- The advantage of being small is that they can be innovative and pilot things at a low level before putting it forward to the NHS, can be more nimble and responsive.
- What's difficult about being a small organisation is when dealing with Clinical Commissioning Groups, they all have to be accessed individually, there are a lot of them and they each have different procedures, this is extremely time-consuming.
- A lot of the work they do is preventative, helping now which helps stave off future physical or mental health problems but funding for preventative work falls into a different field and is to be accessed differently.

About the APPG on Civil Society

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Civil Society and Volunteering exists to provide a forum for discussing issues affecting the voluntary and community sector with Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum.

How to get involved?

- Come to a meeting (details below)
- Join the group - APPG members get advance notice of all of our sessions as well as an invitation to our Christmas Parliamentary Reception. E mail for details
- Give us a call, visit our website or follow us on twitter

Web: www.ncvo.org.uk/appg  Phone: 020 7520 2473
E mail: civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk  Twitter: #appgcs

Future Meetings

- 3rd March 2015
- 9th June
- 14th July
- 13th October
- 7th December

Please RSVP to civilsocietyappg@ncvo.org.uk or telephone 020 7520 2473.