

London ChangeUp ICT Project

ICT support to voluntary and community groups
by the Central London CVSs

FINAL REPORT

for

Central London CVS Network

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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the ICT support provided by the seven Central London Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS): Voluntary Action Camden (VAC), Islington Voluntary Action Council (IVAC), Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC), Lambeth Voluntary Action Council (LVAC), Southwark Action for Voluntary Organisations (SAVO), Voluntary Action Westminster (VAW), and Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency (WVSDA). It is the final piece of work being carried out for the Central London ICT Project, which is part of the National ChangeUp ICT Development, and on which the Service Level Agreement with LASA was based.

The report provides a background to sub-regional ICT work and sets it within a regional and national context. The report goes on to outline the existing ICT support to voluntary and community groups in each of the seven boroughs, along with a summary of proposed ICT activities for the future.

Central London CVS Network decided that the continuation of the project after the end of the year's funding should be to develop a model and operational implementation plan for the setting up of a sub-regional circuit rider project which is a social enterprise. The research included in this report aims to collate information from the existing ICT provision, explore the feasibility of the model, and feed into its implementation.

2. Background

The Home Office report *ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector* (2004) was published in response to HM Treasury's Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery, which highlighted the fact that many frontline organisations are unable to access the support they need to run their services and manage their organisations. Six priority areas were identified for action, one being ICT. The report summarised the sector's main problems in effectively using ICT as follows:

- a lack of strategic understanding of how ICT can benefit frontline organisations
- difficulties in accessing advice, information and support that is affordable, reliable and relevant to the sector
- a lack of understanding of the full costs of ICT with a corresponding reluctance by funders to meet these costs

The London ChangeUp ICT Project co-ordinated by the London Advice Service Alliance (LASA) (www.lasa.org.uk/londonchangeup), was set up to address these issues and to develop an improved ICT support infrastructure for small to medium-sized voluntary groups across London based on the Circuit Rider model.

'Circuit Riders' are mobile ICT support workers, each of whom works with a caseload of small voluntary sector organisations. They discuss ICT issues in plain English, promote technology which meets organisations' needs, and allow non-technical staff to take 'ownership' of their ICT systems. Circuit Riders work in collaboration with each other, offering peer support, communicating learning to stakeholders and making the most effective use of resources by avoiding the 're-invention of the wheel'.

Six sub regional ICT Development Workers (1 for each sub region and 2 in the East). They have been based in Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS), have been funded to set up sub regional Circuit Rider projects, and have delivered ICT support services at borough level, similar to the Superhighways project in South London. A further five staff were funded to undertake projects according to each sub-region's particular needs e.g.

researching ICT training models and piloting circuit rider projects. In Central London sub-region, Clare Cowen is the ICT Development Worker and Seyi Madariola is the ICT Network Coordinator, piloting circuit riding. They are based at SAVO.

The Project Board is made up of representatives from LASA, LVSC, Race on the Agenda (ROTA) and the sub-regional Network Coordinators or representative director.

The project has for the first time brought together CVS ICT projects from across London, and the sub-regional ICT Development Workers have benefited from sharing experiences and lessons learnt from the individual projects in the boroughs. The project has been linked to the national ChangeUp ICT Hub (see www.ichub.org.uk launched 29 March 2006) and ICT developments in the other English regions.

3. Methodology

The aim of this final piece work is to pull together an overall picture of the ICT provision across the Central London sub-region. This final report is based on the intelligence gathered by the ICT Development Worker who met with the CVS Directors or IT staff in all the seven boroughs.

The activities here included:

- **Meetings with the Director and other staff** in Lambeth, Westminster, Camden and Kensington & Chelsea. Meetings held with the IT staff in Wandsworth and Islington. Meeting with CLCVS Network Coordinator. The project workers deliver the ICT work in Southwark.
- **Facilitating workshops** at the LVAC BME ChangeUp consultation and at LVAC large consultation; attending the VAW ChangeUp steering group meeting; attending the CLCVS ChangeUp meeting; facilitating a workshop at the Central London Conference for the Voluntary and Community Sector,
- **Reviewing the final LIPs** for each borough and some earlier drafts, and the Central London Infrastructure Development Plan, and other reports and documents on IT
- **Other meetings:** Monthly project meetings, Circuit Rider network events, London-wide meeting with London Connects to advance local authority-CVS joint work; meeting with the Superhighways Project Manager about their social enterprise research, Project Awayday in March 2006.

A full list of events and meetings is attached as an appendix.

4. ICT work in the Central London CVSs

Central London consists of seven boroughs: Camden, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster.

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across Central London is diverse and constantly changing, mirroring the diversity of the sub-region. Six of the seven boroughs in Central London have NRF status - the exception being Wandsworth.

The sector supports local people and is a voice for communities, especially under-represented ones. The groups serve a broad range of beneficiaries, and offer a wide spectrum of services. In total, the CVSs in the seven boroughs work with some 8,000 groups of every size and type, ranging from small self-help groups with no staff, to large, well-established organisations and branches of national charities. The majority, however, are small community groups, with a relatively low income and small numbers

of staff. The sector is a significant employer in the sub-region, however many groups are reliant on volunteers to deliver their services. A large proportion are BME organisations, which is a reflection of the rich ethnic diversity of the sub-region. There is a good mix of old and new organisations, with roughly half the groups established for longer than 15 years. Most organisations have good links with the other organisations within the sector, although a common complaint is a lack of time for networking. A substantial proportion of groups have received some support from infrastructure organisations such as CVSs, and the likelihood is that this support will continue to be very important, for example in the areas of funding, partnership working and capacity building.

Source: Central London Infrastructure Development Plan

Inconsistency of support for organisations working with socially excluded communities, many of whom work across boroughs, came through as an emergent issue during the development of the ChangeUp Infrastructure Development Plan for Central London.

Three of the seven central London CVSs have an IT worker in post (Wandsworth, Islington and Southwark). Until recently Camden had an IT worker. In Islington and Wandsworth, IT support staff pre-dated April 2005, when the London ChangeUp ICT project started. In Southwark before April 2005 IT work had concentrated on outreach to refugees, users of mental health and community centres using Wireless Outreach Network laptops, and on setting up Interactive Southwark IT network, but since then there has been some direct IT support for groups, including four community centres, a training centre; refugee, pensioners' and arts' forums; and the Local Accountancy Project.

Key ICT Issues in the Infrastructure Development Plan for Central London:

- Hardware purchase (appropriateness and price)
- Commissioning of server networks appropriate to organisation's needs
- Need to support organisations to develop ICT strategies
- Identified need for purchase and development of software to increase efficiency, particularly in areas of finance, monitoring and evaluation and database management
- Sustainability

The level of ICT support to groups varies considerably across the sub-region. There are both common features and differences in the way ICT support has been carried out and in the difficulties highlighted in the three boroughs.

5. Borough Overviews

5.1 Camden (1,538 voluntary and community groups – *source Camden LIP*)

Meetings and consultations held

Meeting with Director 27/9/05. No meeting was possible with the Camden IT worker before his redundancy.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

“A key area to be addressed: High quality local ICT Support, especially for smaller groups”

“A weakness of the voluntary and community sector in Camden: IT resources/expertise”

“A key challenge noted: Keep up with technology.”

“Improving communication and information sharing are priorities for the CLIP and will necessitate collaboration. . . “

“Improving communication and information sharing within the voluntary and community sector in Camden so that organisations and groups know where to go to get the support, training and advice that they need and that there are local voluntary and community sector information access points.”

Source Camden LIP

ICT support in 05/06

Over 40 organisations and groups say that they offer varying degrees of support and advice to the voluntary and community sector. Some may offer IT support.

Source Camden LIP

Planned work outlined in LIP

ICT will provide opportunities for collaboration both locally and regionally. At a local level infrastructure organisations can work together to make computer training and access to equipment available for smaller groups. There will also be opportunities to develop linked IT systems and a joint website.

At a regional level it will be important to develop effective linkages with the ChangeUp funded London ICT Project to ensure that local organisations and groups can benefit from the initiative.

- Providing access to more local IT resources, including equipment and technical support, developing a linked IT communication system to provide alternative access to information, training and advice and exploring the idea of an accessible central Voluntary and Community Sector information website
- Setting up a pilot project targeted at voluntary and community groups, particularly those from minority communities, identified as having the greatest need for access to ICT, providing a local maintenance and supply service
- Encouraging faster take-up of new technology, raising awareness of what is available and highlighting its potential for the Voluntary and Community Sector

Source Camden LIP

Key issues identified

- Affordable support contracts for smaller groups was considered key, with the hope that purchases could be made through a central London social enterprise, which would create employment and be sensitive to the needs of the community.
- The local accountancy project was seen as a model for IT work.
- 12 organisations in Camden were getting six days of training and then 12 mentoring and ongoing business support.

Source - Meeting with Director

Internal IT support to CVS: External company Co-operative Systems provide technical support

ICT worker: in post until mid-October 2005 when funding ended. Caseload of 10-12 organisations for short-term support. Post was funded by Home Office, PCT, Community Empowerment Fund, originated in 'Vibrant Communities' Programme. Gradually more ICT and partnership development work, plus money for capital spend from the Home Office.

5.2 Islington (1,000 voluntary and community organisations; 792 listed on IVAC's Islington Link website

- source *Islington Local Infrastructure Plan*

Meetings and consultations held

First meeting with IT worker, Ian Goodman, on 30/6/05; took part in a meeting to investigate relevance of an IT network on 17/10/05; Discussions, emails, and collaboration have continued, including joint attendance Circuit Rider network and sub-regional meetings.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

Weaknesses: groups' access to ICT is uneven.

Information and communication is a problem for small organisations (technology can either help or hinder). Not everyone is on email

There is no information strategy and no one employed to do it

Survey of the voluntary and community sector identified gaps in service provision, and key priorities for investment in infrastructure support. [ICT was joint second highest; Information was also prominent.]

The key outcomes of research undertaken are that Voluntary and Community Organisations need access to cheap IT and then they need the appropriate training and support to be able to use it. This needs to be combined with interactive, web based information which is easy to find and keep up-to-date.

- source *Islington Local Infrastructure Plan*

Planned work outlined in LIP

Themes for Investment :

"Modernising Infrastructure: ICT – investing in improved access to ICT throughout the sector, ensuring all have access to ICT use and have the support mechanisms (technical, training) to enable sustainable use of modern ICT."

"Embedding quality, improving Reach: Information Communication/ ICT – providing information to all through improved ICT systems, improving web availability of information."

Proposed Activities

Stage one Voluntary and Community Organisations have been given information on the effective use of IT and how to obtain equipment	By December 2005
Stage two Voluntary and Community Organisations are able to gain access to information and give others information through an interactive dynamic website linked to the Community Information Portal	By May 2006
Stage three Voluntary and Community Organisations will attend training workshops on using the new IT systems in place and they will be given information on available IT training together with information on available funding sources to enable them to access it	By March 2006
Stage four Circuit rider event held in September and projects developed including local projects which support Voluntary and Community Organisations, (this may include the development of Social Enterprise)	Ongoing

- source *Islington Local Infrastructure Plan*

Key issues identified

IVAC runs its own website (www.ivac.org.uk) with up to date information, a website for the Islington Community Network (www.islingtoncommunitynetwork.org.uk), and the Islington Link site (www.islingtonlink.org.uk) which provides an online database of Islington's voluntary sector and other online resources. Islington Link is an example of organisations working together to develop 'joined up information'. IVAC's website receives over 55,000 page views annually, while Islington Link receives over 5,000 visits.

Well-established voluntary organisations are linked into networks, systems, mainstream funding and new initiatives which provide many sources of good quality information including websites, newsletters, briefings, downloads, and databases. However many organisations, particularly BME and marginalised groups, are excluded from full participation because they have difficulty negotiating their way through the information, communication and funding systems in the borough

- source *Islington Local Infrastructure Plan*

ICT support in 05/06

IT support work is seen as capacity building to groups on IT issues; Supported 39 groups in depth

Provided advocacy, advice, signposting and some technical work

IT Health check is available on IVAC website for groups to complete

Comprehensive IT section on website, including download section

IT is included in the bi-monthly printed Islington Community News (also on website)

Case study: "Trusted Expert"

An organisation based in Islington that offers advice and support to young people has its own support contract and has is set up with a Windows 200 Server and network. This network has been in place for just over two years. Their support

company had recommended that the server be replaced as it was not able to cope with the expectations placed upon it. The organisation was not convinced by this and contacted the IVAC ICT Support and Development Officer.

After discussions between the ICT Officer and the organisation it was agreed that this was an expensive solution to the problem of information management. The ICT Worker worked with the organisation to improve how digital information was handled. The organisation went back to their support company with the advice given by the ICT worker. Armed with this information they were able to get a substantially reduced quote to increase the size of the hard drive on the server without a complete replacement.

IT worker in post: Funded by the Bridge House Trust until September 2006.

Internal IT support to CVS: Cooperative Systems (external company). IT worker concentrates on external support.

5.3 Kensington & Chelsea (500+ groups - source LIP)

Meetings and consultations held

Meeting with director and information worker 13/2/06; two telephone discussions with director

ICT support needs identified in LIP

A training needs analysis conducted in 2005 by KCSC highlighted Information and Communication Technology use as an area where training was required; specific areas requested were Desk top publishing and computer presentations (MS PowerPoint).

An IT mapping survey carried out for KCSC in 2003 identified that admin workers, senior managers and management committee members all needed training in IT. The types of training most requested were: internet use, desk top publishing, database development and management, presentation skills, using a spread sheet, word processing skills and e mail use. People favoured on-site training in their own premises.

There is not a single, well-maintained, computerised database of voluntary and community organisations working in Kensington and Chelsea. Frontline organisations would like access to up-to-date information that contains the location, contact details, area of work, target groups etc., of all voluntary and community organisations. A map containing such information was produced about 12 years ago for the Earls Court area, but was never updated.

Information on service delivery issues, funding, changes in legislation, regional and national infrastructure support etc will be more effectively and efficiently disseminated through the KCSC website and e-mail newsgroups.

Source: Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Plan, Kensington & Chelsea

Gaps/areas for improvement

Lack of access to trouble shooting advice and practical support in solving hardware and software problems.

Help needed with website development, both at set-up stage and with maintenance of existing sites.

Group purchasing of equipment such as computers, maintenance contracts, printing services etc. was felt to have cost saving potential.

People lacked support writing funding bids for technical equipment, and direction to funders that are promoting funding for such equipment

There is also the feeling that voluntary and community organisations do not have access to the skills that volunteers from the business sector can bring, for example management consultants, IT specialists and designers.

Source: Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Plan, Kensington & Chelsea

ICT support in 05/06

There is currently no provision of ICT infrastructure support from any of the four main Local Infrastructure Organisations: KCSC, the Volunteer Centre, Migrants and Refugee Communities Forum, and Canalside House.

Planned work outlined in LIP

Improving effectiveness through ICT: To improve the effectiveness of voluntary and community organisations in using information technology there will be dedicated IT support provided by a specialist employed and based in KCSC. Provision will include training in software usage, support and trouble shooting on hardware and software issues, advice on purchase, configuration and maintenance contracts.

It was proposed that this would be funded from ChangeUp sources from 2006/7, to include IT support through training, problem solving, advice on purchases and maintenance contracts, by KCSC.

Source: Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Plan, Kensington & Chelsea

Key issues identified

An **Information Technology mapping survey of voluntary sector organisations** was done in 2003 (attached as an appendix). This is the only survey done by a central London CVS and is useful for that reason. The results are likely to be broadly similar to other central London boroughs.

An important conclusion to the survey was that the LSP had wrongly assumed that local community groups would be able to access information through their website. Many had no computers, and many lacked the necessary skills.

The survey gives quite a detailed picture of IT in 100 organisations, about half of whom had over £50k budgets and about 15% had less than £10k. Of all the organisations in the survey, 32% had no computers; 43% had between 2 and 10, but only 28% of these were networked. Some computers were very old. Use of the internet and email were surveyed, indicating dissatisfaction with current access by many organisations, as well as the range of programs used; 68 organisations gave details on how they maintained their computers: 48 used outside contractors (16 with contracts), 20 asked friends and colleagues if a problem arose. 36% of organisations felt their senior managers would benefit from computer training, and 23% their trustees; 41% stated that admin staff would benefit. On-site training was the preferred method of training for 44% of organisations, compared with 23% off-site.

It was also recommended that versatile methods for staff training should be explored, for example the provision of European Computer Driving License, Distance Learning and other out-of-hours computer training packages, in addition to on-site training.

Following the recommendations of the survey, £30k NRF funding was provided for a small grants fund for IT equipment, which was oversubscribed, but benefited 36 organisations. An on-site tailor-made training programme was provided for 20 voluntary and community organisations in autumn 2003, also oversubscribed. A large number of organisations requested an ongoing training programme. Many also sought trouble-shooting technical help from the trainer and requested trouble-shooting information to be included in the training manual. An IT helpdesk for voluntary and community organisations was suggested and it was recommended that a circuit rider service ('technical PC repair/maintenance support for the voluntary sector') should be investigated.

The survey painted a rather bleak picture of IT provision in Kensington and Chelsea at that time, with no coordinated IT support, IT training or funding for IT. Although there will have been improvements since the survey was conducted, it will not have changed that substantially.

Internal IT support to CVS:

External IT support is called in when needed. A contract was felt to be preferable, and this was being investigated.

ICT worker no IT post

5.4 Lambeth (Approximately 2,000 organisations that can be classified as belonging to the Voluntary and Community Sector in Lambeth. Within this figure there are over 1,000 BME voluntary/community organisations.

Source: Lambeth Local Infrastructure Plan

Meetings and consultations held

Meeting with information worker, 21/6/05; Facilitated ICT workshops at Developing/Small/BME Consultation Event on ChangeUp, 22/7/05 and Open Consultation event 9/9/05. Meeting with Director and new Information and Communications Manager. 15/2/06.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

ICT issues for VCOs in Lambeth are complex and are a key area for development. Many organisations still do not have proper internet access or email facilities, so regional and local strategies will need to encompass access at very basic levels for small, frontline VCOs, combined with more sophisticated ICT networks, websites and databases that larger VCO's and second tier groups can access and develop.

Key 3 ICT Needs of Frontline Organisations

36 % Website Development

25% Joint - (i) lack of hardware and (ii) ICT staff

14% Database Development Issues

Source: Lambeth Local Infrastructure Plan

ICT support in 05/06

LVAC has not provided IT technical support, but has operated some signposting to support organisations in the borough. Brixton Online Ltd is a local Social Enterprise which has supported voluntary and community organisations in the borough over many years. They still provide free training but have said they are moving away from cheap IT support to groups and believe that organisations need to strive to have proper contracts in place to receive ICT support, rather than hoping for something on the cheap.

Buying computers

The Realise IT project was established to increase the recycling and reuse of redundant IT equipment being disposed of by businesses in central London, and making that equipment available for use by people in Lambeth, Southwark, Westminster and the City of London. It is no longer based in Lambeth, so the resource is no longer accessible to voluntary and community groups.

OFFERS/Ex-IT and Community Technology are two alternative organisations working in Lambeth (and adjacent boroughs) to offer low-cost IT equipment for individuals and organisations, along with technical support and training.

There are also other firms, large and small who offer IT support in some form, but there is no coherent signposting or information service.

Planned work outlined in LIP

One of the most effective ways to support BME and marginalised groups is to develop their ICT capacity, to enable communication with client groups and other networks, and to develop online services. ChangeUp's ICT strand at local and regional level will help to provide the infrastructure to develop these services and organisations.

Source: Lambeth Local Infrastructure Plan

Key issues identified

LVAC are aware of very few 'accidental techies' (people who have responsibility for IT within their organisation by chance rather than because they have real knowledge) in Lambeth groups, who seem on the whole to manage on a wing and a prayer. Very often they do not plan to for a post to cover IT within their own organisation. Many do not even have access to the internet.

There is a need to make groups aware of the benefits of internet access and ICT in general, which could be followed by courses to develop the 'accidental techie'. Education is also needed to persuade trustees to free up resources and approve spending on IT support, training and equipment. Lambeth Council is moving to do all their grants administration electronically and groups could be left behind.

There is a need to develop the base knowledge in voluntary organisations rather than just fixing computers. A good parallel is with the Local Accountancy Project who develop organisations' own ability rather than just doing the work for them.

It was felt that organisations are so small that they need help with support or planning. A health check could be conducted and the development of IT could be planned in, getting organisations used to the idea of ICT support and putting them

in touch with other funding organisations. This would be linked with LVAC's development workers.

Websites and databases figured as key needs for Lambeth organisations. Funders require more information on the people groups are working with and more sophisticated ways of collecting outputs and outcomes. While there are a variety of ways of achieving a website, some non-technical and cheap, for databases even the concept is complex and a clear brief needs to be developed.

IT support provided through LVAC would need to make the maximum benefit in a real way – not just fixing printers, but dealing with underlying needs.

Source: Meeting with LVAC Director

Internal IT support to CVS: LVAC uses an external company

ICT Worker Lambeth has no ICT worker in post to support groups externally.

LVAC's new Information and Communications Officer works on the website and has IT skills that are invaluable in supporting LVAC internally. At present there is no IT section on the website, but the Information Officer is well qualified to promote IT issues in the organisation's newsletter and other communications.

5.5 Southwark (Approximately 1,600 organisations and community groups. The black and minority ethnic sector is made of about 300 groups, but the many of the service users of other voluntary and community groups are from black and minority communities. – *source LIP*)

Meetings and consultations held

The Central London ICT Development Worker and ICT Network Coordinator are based at SAVO. The ICT Network Coordinator plays a circuit rider role in the borough.

The ICT components in the Southwark LIP were developed through the Interactive Southwark IT Network which began in August 2004 and has continued to inform work in the borough during the London ICT Project.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

Ensure ICT needs of VCOs in Southwark are met

Ensure the needs of BME and small groups are included in any ICT infrastructure planning

Gain clear picture of ICT in infra-structure organisations.

Coordinate ICT training and support

ICT support in 05/06

A cross-sector, borough-wide ICT network, Interactive Southwark, has been established to:

- Strengthen accessibility and use of IT in Southwark through coordination, information sharing and joint initiatives
- Support the development of cohesive voluntary and community IT
- Provide a platform for discussion and information sharing and joint initiatives in Southwark

Case study – Interactive Southwark IT network

'ICT workers can feel very isolated in their own organisations if no one else has IT knowledge. Interactive Southwark provides an excellent meeting place to network with other people working with IT in the voluntary sector and break that isolation.'

Roopa Alex, IT Worker, Confederation of Indian Organisations

ICT needs assessment of 44 infrastructure organisations in the borough has been conducted. Results are in process of analysis. Initial results show that ICT infrastructure in the voluntary and community sector is still behind the public and private sectors; annual expenditure on ICT is inadequate and usually ad hoc.

A ChangeUp capital fund was awarded to SAVO to develop the ICT infrastructure in the borough. The Needs Assessment determined where infrastructure should be upgraded (10 organisations) and which community centres should be established as broadband hotspots (4).

Case study – new computers

'SAVO has provided three computers to assist the work of LAP. We now have wireless broadband, which makes our job faster. It improves our information system and makes us more efficient in supporting groups on payroll, for instance, and helps us maintain the integrity of information. Our staff are more motivated if everything works well.'

Ade Adebambo, Director, Local Accountancy Project

Case study – networking existing computers

'The new IT suite has turned what once was just an empty room into a very welcoming environment. People are always commenting how well it looks. SCCF are running an NVQ Course on Health Advocacy and their trainees use the internet facilities during breaks in their studies.

The new IT suite has also allowed us to free up our training rooms and use them for what they were intended for, training. Those wishing to surf the internet can do so in the new suite. Also kids come in and use the suite after school, so this has proved excellent in providing a place for them to go, to either catch up on their studies or surf the net safely. The new suite has not only proved to be a valuable resource for Gharweg but also for the many VCS groups in the building: African Child Organisation, Bona Boto Union, Abantu for development, SIDAMA.'

Nyeya Yen, Coordinator, Gharweg Advice, Training & Careers Centre.

A very successful Community ICT Fair brought together suppliers, IT support companies and voluntary and community groups in October 05, with major in-kind support from LB Southwark. Several suppliers requested a similar fair in central London.

Case study – ICT Fair

The ICT Fair is very good for the community; if possible this event should take place 2-3 times a year.' - *Omer Kanyinda, Probus*

'Very enjoyable, great for networking. Job well done! Would come again.' - *Marie Burke, SICAD*

SAVO's website was designed and is maintained by the ICT Network Coordinator and has an ICT section.

Monthly e-bulletins go out (SAVO members' e-bulletin, BME e-bulletin, Interactive Southwark e-bulletin, local ones to two neighbourhoods)

IT development work (circuit rider support) has been provided to 14 organisations.

Case study – IT support to groups

Just to say a HUGE thank you for coming and rescuing us yesterday - you were like Super IT Man when you had 3 PCs on the go at the same time!! Thanks for everything you sorted out and for the tips and information you gave me.

Katie Napier, Website & Communications Co-ordinator, Volunteer Centre Southwark

Planned work outlined in LIP

Further development of ICT network across the borough

Obtain funding for a Circuit Rider post

Promote alternative approaches to ICT

Develop access to affordable and recycled equipment

Database of IT providers: services and products

Information dissemination / Toolkit on IT security and use

ICT Needs assessment. of BME organisations

Outreach to BME projects who don't have access to ICT at present

Signposting to ICT training and ICT support

Key issues identified

SAVO had had an IT support worker in post until May 2004. After that the IT/C manager, worked on the Wireless Outreach Network [outreach with laptops to marginalised communities]; and the into partnership [Communications and Information Exchange]. The borough-wide, cross-sector Interactive Southwark IT Network had been established in August 2004 and became the mechanism for informing the IT section of the LIP.

Recycled equipment

A good working relationship has been developed with OFFERS/Ex-IT, who work in partnership with Southwark council, to collect redundant computer equipment from businesses and residents. Computers in reusable conditions are tested and refurbished while older or broken computers are refurbished. They work in Southwark, Lambeth, Westminster and the City of London and are an important source of cheap recycled IT equipment. They are also promoting Open Source software and are due to begin training courses shortly.

ICT workers:

Central London ICT Development Worker and ICT Network Coordinator in post, funding ends in April 2006.

Internal IT support to SAVO:

SAVO's ICT Network Coordinator maintains the internal network and equipment. An on-demand arrangement exists with a local company, System Solutions.

SAVO's server crashed in July 2005 and the backup procedures established by the previous IT support company failed and could not be retrieved. A new company had to resolve the problem. This underlined the issues of funding to maintain ICT. SAVO had received capital funding to enhance the ICT of Southwark infrastructure organisations, including SAVO, which enabled a much-needed upgrade of equipment, some of it very old.

5.6 Wandsworth (700 voluntary and community groups

– source: *Wandsworth Local Infrastructure Plan*)

Meetings and consultations held

Meeting with ICT Support Worker Paul Allen and Sector Development Manager Patrick Jones, 16/6/05; Discussions, emails, and collaboration have continued, including joint attendance Circuit Rider network and sub-regional meetings.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

The voluntary and community sector does not make the best use of information and community technology to improve its performance and deliver better services. This is a particular problem for smaller community groups – and infrastructure support is often lacking for these groups.

VCOs don't always appreciate the benefits ICT can bring to what they do and have problems accessing advice and support on ICT that is appropriate and affordable to them. Funders do not always cover the full costs of ICT.

Organisations don't appear to be taking into account the cost of ownership of their computer equipment, and are excluding the costs of troubleshooting support, network administration, backup and security.

In Wandsworth, accessing ICT advice and support was highlighted in the consultation. This was seen by many groups as being part of a wider problem of developing adequate administrative systems, including support with very practical things like photocopying, office equipment, filing and storage. Again, smaller groups had greater problems in these areas. It was also felt that organisations are becoming more reliant on the ICT for critical work without acknowledging the need for an appropriate level of management, staff time and funding.

– source: *Wandsworth Local Infrastructure Plan*)

ICT support in 05/06

Supported 30+ groups in depth, many more at different levels

Groups have 5-19 full-time computers, average is 4

Advocacy (link between groups and IT support companies) rather than “techie” support

Helps groups formulate ideas

IT section on website

Run some IT training courses

Part-time person in post to provide IT support in-house

ICT services publicised quarterly to 810 organisations

Below are three of case studies undertaken by WVSDA's IT worker. More are included in the appendix.

Case study - Thessaly Community Project

A court case for compensation had been taken out against an IT company previously contracted to install a network in the new building. They had not completed the project, partly due to the fact the 27 computers were purchased a year before the building was completed and stored. I was asked to assess the current network set-up and make recommendations. I also liaised with a new IT support company to negotiate specification and quotes. During this process 2 key staff left suddenly and I had to induct the new staff on the process. A new manager and trainer were appointed and I had several meetings with them to hand over the work I had been involved with.

Case study - Wandsworth Welcare

I was asked to carry out a health check by the office manager who had attended some IT training we had offered. She was overwhelmed with trying to manage a network of 8 computers with little knowledge or experience. An IT technician with his own company was carrying out ad hoc troubleshooting support on an ad-hoc/voluntary basis. After delivering the report and arranging a meeting with the project director and their IT technician, a new network is being installed, a formal contract is being agreed with the IT support company and staff are going on training.

Case study - Body Action

I was asked to troubleshoot problems with an Internet connection. I removed viruses, spy ware and set-up a firewall. I returned to help resolve a software problem on 3 loaned laptops to run some video authoring software. The organisation is run from someone's own home and is seeking funded to expand into an office.

Planned work outlined in LIP

12.5 ICT Action Plans

The sub-regional partnership is currently working to develop a joint ICT project and this action plan will need to be reviewed once this project is developed.

Ten year Objectives	Outcome	Action	Time-scale
Assess support needs of VCOs and baseline (including access to internet)	Infrastructure is aware of current access to internet and PCs and of future needs	Map current IT provision and research into potential needs	2005-6
Offer technical and troubleshooting support, strategic advice and signposting through an IT worker for VCOs	VCOs receive the support they need to make effective use of IT	Provide outreach to BME workers to promote support available	2005-6
		Maintain the current superhighways projects whilst obtaining funding for Circuit rider scheme to undertake capacity building for IT with VCOs, needs assessments.	2005-8
Provide rolling IT training for small VCO workers	Training is targeted to the needs of VCO workers	Identify an appropriate local agency to take training forward (if circuit rider funding is not successful or cannot meet gaps in superhighways project)	2005-6
		Tailor and target IT training to 25 BME groups	2005-2010
		Provide training on managing data	2006-2010
		Change up to identify training courses which could take the needs of disabled people Learners into account and signpost	2008-14
		Promote courses to disability VCOs	2008-14
Setup an ICT consortium group	Provide peer support, share knowledge	Share info on sources for Hardware and software	2005-6

– source: Wandsworth Local Infrastructure Plan)

Key issues identified

Broadband related issues frequent

No IT needs assessments of sector has been conducted

High staff turnover in groups supported impairs development of ICT

ICT not seen as mission critical, neither equipment nor training are budgeted for

The objective is to **build capacity and sustainability** of ICT within the organisations supported, not just to fix today's problem.

Flexibility in publicising and delivering ICT capacity building services is key to working with diverse organisations.

Need to demystify ICT and make the jargon more accessible.

Internal IT support to WVSDA: External company, plus some by IT support officer ICT worker

Wandsworth has had a circuit rider, Paul Allen, in post since February 2004 as part of the Superhighways Partnership circuit rider project in South London. His report of July 2005 is included as an appendix (Wandsworth IT Report).

Superhighways funding for the post ended in January 2006. ChangeUp contingency funding will maintain the current level of provision for six months.

5.7 Westminster (600 voluntary organisations).

- source: Westminster Local Infrastructure Plan

Meetings and consultations held

Meeting with Capacity Building Manager, 30/6/05; observers at ChangeUp Steering Group meeting, 13/9/05.

ICT support needs identified in LIP

6. IT needs relate to hardware, software and maintenance as well as broadening and upgrading web-based assets

9.2.4 Medium-sized organisations in the City receive the least support.

9.2.5 A high proportion of volunteers are non residents and the majority are under 35, resulting in a lack of daytime and weekend volunteers.

9.2.6 There are some poor quality providers.

9.2.10 Much IT equipment is old, inefficient or inadequate.

9.2.11 IT maintenance expertise and IT maintenance funding are insufficient.

Broader ICT issues:

Exclusion of those with no/low IT skills	Database management
Existing IT resource centres face-	Model spreadsheets
• disability issues	Over-reliance on systems rather than personal contact
• language issues	Maintenance issues
• global networking challenge	Donated /purchased 2nd hand
IT-based links for trustees	No maintenance contract
	Lack of resources for disaster recovery

- source: Westminster Local Infrastructure Plan

ICT support in 05/06

VAW do not provide any external IT support. No IT survey/or needs assessment has been undertaken as VAW does not have the means to meet such needs as would be identified. An ICT strategy was under development by a VAW ICT sub-group, but no external strategies. VAW does not offer IT-specific training courses, but many exist in the borough. Queries are referred to Metropole College or Queen's Park New Media.

- source: Meeting with Capacity Building Manager

The sector is a significant trainer with 100 organisations providing accredited training to 17,000 people each year.

New IT suites in community settings will contribute towards the City Council policy for a Westminster Wireless City

- source: *Westminster Local Infrastructure Plan*

Planned work outlined in LIP

Due to the separate and specific focus given to IT within ChangeUp, this consultation assumes that improving IT skills and resourcing to the VCS will be dealt with by those specialist initiatives.

- source: *Westminster Local Infrastructure Plan*

Key issues identified

The practicalities of implementing a comprehensive IT support strategy are highlighted by existing IT training specialists who find it difficult in their own organisations to replace equipment subject to wear and tear. Training staff also undertake maintenance work which interrupts the training schedule. 'Miracle money' is needed for software.

The challenges of adhering to the Data Protection Act were highlighted.

Organisations report good City Council feedback to organisations wishing to link into the 'Wireless City' initiative, many of whom are already involved with UKOnline.

It was felt that however small the group, it needed to plan its hardware and software purchases (usually bought incrementally). Assistance to develop IT plans, information about how to get hard- and software cheaply, and high quality, affordable maintenance were the most important requirements. On-line information was essential, including central sign-posting to support services. A training toolkit and helpline would also be valuable.

Possibility of business volunteer support to groups in a more targeted way: in house over a period.

- source: *Westminster Local Infrastructure Plan*

Internal IT support to VAW:

External company called in as required. Entering tendering process for external support. In-house IT, intranet and database work reasonably well.

ICT worker: None

6. Superhighways Partnership

The South London CVS Partnership's Superhighways Partnership runs a circuit rider ICT support project in South London, which developed from within the South London CVSs. Their experiences in IT support, conducted as part of overall CVS development work, was a useful contribution to the London-wide ChangeUp ICT Project. Previously, Wandsworth was part of the South London sub-region, and the IT worker was recruited as part of the Superhighways Project.

Objectives of the Superhighways project, as listed in the Wandsworth IT Report (attached) are:

- to build capacity and sustainability of ICT within an organisation over an extended period.
- to act as an independent advocate for the sector with ICT companies and ICT suppliers.
- to carry out healthchecks, write reports and work with organisations to implement short term recommendations and look to longer term planning, training and budgeting for their ICT.
- to disseminate ICT knowledge in 'low' technical language.
- to act as a conduit for ICT information, 'hints and tips' and new technology for organisations etc
- to signpost ICT companies who give reliable, good value to voluntary sector organisations.
- to offer ICT training courses for staff and volunteers working within organisations.
- to build confidence and get recognition for workers in IT roles within organisations
- to be an additional IT support / troubleshooting resource within the host CVS.
- to document the ICT procedures, logs of work and processes, to maintain ICT continuity for organisations.
- to work within the Voluntary Sector Development Team in the host CVS to support new and existing groups.
- to work as a Superhighways team member to produce ICT related resources, provide training and extend a knowledge base across boroughs.

Social Enterprise

The Superhighways project has investigated the feasibility of operating as a social enterprise. A meeting was held between the Superhighways project manager, Central London ICT Development Worker and Islington IT Worker to discuss its applicability to central London. The consultant's report is available on the Superhighways website. It recommends:

1. that the existing project should be repositioned to operate as a hybrid social enterprise model with the Superhighways 'strategic hub' placed within the new SLCVS structure, while continuing operationally to function along current lines (technical support staff employed and funded at an individual borough level). The repositioning should include introduction of a tiered fee paying membership scheme.
2. that an independent trading arm be established under the umbrella of the SLCVS structure, not limited to ICT-related activity. Preliminary financial analysis indicated the trading arm would require 3-5 year development time before it was likely to break even and would need quite significant financing, including loan facilities.

Superhighways project began in 1997, and has a track record of several years as a CVS IT project working across several boroughs. This is a difference compared to ICT support in Central London, and will influence how the work is taken forward by CLCVS. The report provides a useful starting point.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

1. **Joint working** established across the sub-region during the Central London ICT Project by the existing ICT staff should continue, as should the links with the London Regional IT support workers / circuit riders and national ICT developments.
2. A **CLCVS 'ICT Hub'** - IT support workers' network - would strengthen the support given and assist signposting, combining technical advice and liaising with IT support companies.
3. **ICT support is development work.** The way that local accountancy projects work is a useful analogy for how circuit workers should work and was cited in meetings in three CVSs.
4. **Charging for certain IT services** could be implemented even before a social enterprise structure is determined. This could include training (e.g. websites, databases), technical trouble-shooting or consultancy.
5. Circuit riding aims to achieve **more coherent IT support** rather than replace IT support companies. IT support staff would play an advocacy role with companies, to assist appropriate specification of equipment purchase or service contracts
6. A **circuit rider in each borough** should be the eventual aim. The London ChangeUp ICT Project set out to establish this as an aim and has prepared guidelines to assist applications.
7. The need continues to **raise the profile of ICT** with funders, infrastructure organisations, and capacity builders as well as trustees and small groups.
8. **Need to upskill staff working in infrastructure** organisations as well as those in frontline organisations; equip capacity builders and community development workers to be aware of how IT can assist service delivery and how to sign-post the groups they support.
9. **Internal IT support in CVSs:** Even with an IT worker in post a service contract or formal arrangement with an outside company should be in place. Budgets need to include external IT support.
10. **Central London CVS Network** has some impressive examples of websites and other e-communication resources, such as the CVS and CLCVS websites, Islington Community Network and the Islington Link site, as well as e-bulletins. This is an important area to develop.
11. **Databases** often come up as needs. Is this always an informed statement, or is there sometimes a belief that 'databases', whatever they mean to the person concerned, are a magical solution to undefined problems? This needs to be investigated and developed.
12. **Websites:** Small organisations can develop their own websites without having to buy expensive web-design software and learn sophisticated programs. Examples are the London Connects and the *into* (Elephant & Castle) websites where groups can create their own sites very simply, or www.1and1.co.uk, being used by WVSDA to train groups to maintain their website. Without dismissing sophisticated and complex sites that some organisations need and will pay for, groups should be empowered to manage their own websites, if they so wish.
13. **Recycled computers** are a good way to tackle equipment needs for small groups, but need to be properly organised. Recycled computers from by well-meaning private-sector organisations can present a minefield of problems. The OFFERS/Ex-IT scheme, which works in three Central London boroughs, checks, refurbishes and

tests ICT equipment. Similar projects should be identified who provide proper support and training.

14. **Open Source:** Free open source software can benefit the voluntary sector and small community groups, because it overcomes the barrier of expensive software, but it too needs a context where proper support and training is available.