



A partnership of organisations from the voluntary and community sector that are based in, or work in, Stockton-on-Tees



Annual Review - April 2014

Pictures:

- *Front cover: photos from activity delivered by Tees Valley Arts as part of Synergy's NEET project, taken by one of the young people who took part.*
- *Page 2: beneficiaries of the Improving Futures activities delivered by Eastern Ravens Trust and Hardwick in Partnership as part of Synergy's Health Improvement Initiatives, and of activity delivered by Know How North East / Corner House Youth Project as part of Synergy's NEET project.*



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Welcome and introduction

From Amanda Rylander (Chair), and Jon Goodwin (Executive Director).



Hello and welcome to Synergy's Annual Review. We're actually reporting on a 17-month period from November 2012 to March 2014 in order to get 'in sync' with the standard financial year. In future we'll revert to reporting on consortium activity over a 12-month period (April – March).

And what a 17 months it's been! We registered the Synergy hub organisation as a charity, established our own office within Catalyst House, and appointed Jon as our first Executive Director (sadly saying goodbye to Dave King who did so much for us in Synergy's early days). We have become increasingly independent from Catalyst, entering into a business-to-business relationship with them as our landlords and provider of some 'back-office' services.

The membership of the consortium expanded to 30, ranging in size from large to small, and including charities, community interest companies and companies limited by guarantee. The local public sector showed great faith in our ability to deliver, investing more than £650,000 in Synergy to deliver a range of innovative and ambitious projects which harnessed the voluntary sector's ability to change people's lives and capitalised on the benefits that partnership working can bring.

Before we go on to look at the successful work undertaken by our members under the Synergy banner, and our plans for the future, it's worth reminding ourselves of the background, structure, vision, mission, and objectives of the consortium.

Background and structure

Formed in 2012 by a merger of two voluntary sector consortia, Synergy VCS Consortium is a partnership of organisations that are based in, or work in, the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. At present there are two main areas of focus: firstly, on the health and wellbeing of local residents, and secondly, on improving the lives of children and young people in the borough.

Synergy operates with a 'hub and spokes' structure. The hub is the central staff resource that acts as the engine of Synergy, accessing contracts and funding opportunities, liaising with commissioners and funders, collating monitoring and performance information, and managing the consortium's finances. The 'spokes' are the various individual member organisations which provide services, normally by way of a sub-contract with the 'hub'.

The Synergy 'hub' has been established as a separate legal body (a charity and a company limited by guarantee) with its own board of trustees, who include member representatives along with independent, external experts.

Our vision

An area in which everyone has the ability to realise their own potential and which will result in a thriving local community.

Our mission

To win significant resources to sustain and grow high quality voluntary and community sector provision in response to identified needs.

Our objectives

(As set out in our governing document):

To promote efficiency and effectiveness in the charitable activities of not-for-profit organisations, voluntary groups and charities working for the benefit of the public with children and young people and in the fields of community health and social care;

To advance the education of those involved with the voluntary and not-for-profit sector working with children and young people and in the fields of community health and social care.

Looking back...

at the period from 1st November 2012 to 31st March 2014

The seventeen-month period in question has been an exceptionally transformational and successful time for Synergy, which is in many ways unrecognisable from the consortium that existed in November 2012.

In this period:

- The hub was formally registered as a charity (July 2013);
- We appointed a full-time Executive Director (August 2013);
- The subsidy from Catalyst's Transforming Local Infrastructure programme came to an end (September 2013);
- We subsequently drew up a Service Level Agreement with Catalyst - as such they act as our landlords, the formal employer of Synergy staff, and the provider of 'back-office' services in areas such as HR, finance and ICT.

Most significantly, five high profile projects have been secured and delivered successfully, with a total contract value of more than £650,000 across the period. More than 800 people have been directly supported by these projects, and 14 of our member organisations have been involved in delivery.

The five projects, covered in detail on the following pages, are

- Health Improvement Initiatives (Healthways, Close2Home and Improving Futures);
- Troubled Families;
- Parenting Project;
- NEET Project;
- Community Reintegration and Family Support.

Finally, in September 2013 the Synergy hub was selected as lead voluntary sector partner on Stockton's Ageing Better programme. This involves us leading on the development of a Vision and Strategy for initiatives to reduce social isolation amongst older people, and if successful will involve us managing finances of up to £6,000,000 across a six-year period from 2015.

Finances in this period

Total turnover for the period in question was £684,715.

For a full breakdown of hub financial activity in the period, please see our full Financial Statements for the following periods:

- 1st November 2012 – 31st October 2013
- 1st November 2013 – 31st March 2014

Health Improvement Initiatives

In early 2013 Synergy received funding from Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health Stockton to design, develop and deliver a range of Health Improvement Initiatives aimed at reducing health inequalities in the borough. This funding represented significant faith in Synergy as a means to facilitate and manage innovative third sector service delivery.

A 'Health Accelerator' workshop was held in May 2013 in order to facilitate partnership working on this agenda. Three projects, involving a total of 11 Synergy members, were subsequently selected to receive funding: Healthways, Close2Home and Improving Futures. Elements of all three projects will run at least until late spring 2014, with discussions on future funding to follow.

The Synergy hub is responsible for ensuring joined up working between the three projects, liaising with commissioners, monitoring, reporting, and publicity.

In the period to March 2014, the projects supported nearly 600 people to stay out of hospital, make positive lifestyle improvements, and access mainstream health services.

Healthways

A Way Out, Five Lamps, Big Life Families and Bridges

Healthways offers targeted, personalised, in-depth and flexible support to vulnerable people and families who are at risk of poor health outcomes, offering information on where to get help, support with contacting services, and if necessary, help with taking that difficult first step 'through the door'.

So far, more than 260 people have accessed support with reducing alcohol consumption, stopping smoking, welfare advice, dealing with anxiety and depression, and keeping fit.

One such person is 'Mr C', who was supported by *Bridges* as part of the Healthways project. Mr C is 51 and lives in central Stockton. He has had a long history of alcohol abuse and chaotic behaviour and was registered as an alcoholic. He was referred to Healthways by his partner who was concerned for his welfare; he was living in squalid conditions and at risk of losing his tenancy. He was drinking in excess of 30 units every day, and his health was drastically deteriorating. By offering encouragement, support and access to services that have helped him reduce his alcohol consumption, *Bridges* staff have helped Mr C improve his life beyond recognition. In part this is down to his own perseverance and the love of his partner, but Mr C admits that

being supported into the right service at the right time was crucial, and that without Healthways' support his future would have looked bleak.

Close2Home

Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind, Stockton CAB and 3Scoreyears&10 CIC.

This project identifies and support people with multiple long term conditions and mental health needs who have previously been admitted to hospital in an emergency, find it difficult to access services or are isolated without any support. At the time of writing more than 30 people have been offered in-depth, personalised support from the project.

Only two of these people have been admitted to hospital, and 100% of clients have reported that they are continuing to attend their clinical appointments. Alongside reduced hospital admissions and improved wellbeing, one of the key outcomes of the project is the increased use of health or community-based services; the project has referred people to a range of external partners including weight management services, GPs, community nurses, health trainer, Stockton Navigation Project, mental health services and providers offering physical activity.

Improving Futures

Know How North East/Corner House Youth Project, Groundwork North East, Eastern Ravens Trust and Hardwick in Partnership

Improving Futures offers support to families, single parents, young care leavers and young carers; project workers encourage people to make healthy lifestyle choices, be more physically active, and register with health services. More than 175 individuals have been supported, with 64 families joining an innovative 'Street Eats' scheme delivered as part of the project.

One person that Improving Futures has made a huge difference to is Mark Leeson, who lives in Hardwick. Mark, pictured on page 2 of this report, has epilepsy and was lacking in confidence when he started attending sessions delivered by *Hardwick in Partnership* as part of Improving Futures. He was supported to complete an NOCN course in Nutrition, Performance and Healthy Eating which focused on the function of and benefits of different types of food, giving him the knowledge he needs to make healthy lifestyle decisions, and confidence in his own abilities.

Troubled Families

A Way Out, The Children's Society, Eastern Ravens Trust, Know How North East / Corner House Youth Project

Delivered under a contract with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, this project involves four of our member organisations supporting families (identified by the local authority) to make significant improvements in terms of anti-social behaviour, crime, school attendance and employment.

Workers from our four organisations support families to improve their lives in a variety of ways, providing innovative, flexible and sensitive solutions to their problems. These include domestic violence, mental health issues, low levels of confidence, and relationship issues, and are often the root causes of the anti-social behaviour, crime, and poor levels of achievement that the families display.

Working in troubling, abnormal situations on a daily basis, our workers:

- are dedicated to, and supportive of, the families they are working with;
- are assertive and challenging;
- will give practical, hands-on support, 'showing' not 'telling' families how to do things;
- take a holistic, whole family approach.

In Year One of the project (to September 2013), Synergy was allocated 72 families, engaged with 67 (93%) of these and were successful in supporting 40 (55%) families to make the necessary improvements in their lives (a 50% success rate is the target).

Partnership working (between Synergy member organisations, the hub staff team, various parts of the local authority and external partners) is key to the success of this project, and it is the Synergy project where the hub staff team play the greatest 'hands-on' role in the management and coordination of delivery. Subject to continued successful performance, our involvement in this programme will run until March 2015.

Parenting Project

Tees Valley Housing – Supported Housing Team

In spring 2013, Synergy was approached by Stockton Borough Council and the Stockton Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service to provide a project, to run throughout 2013-2014, that would support work already underway in Stockton regarding parenting. The aim was to provide 'light touch' support to families following their completion of parenting programmes (such as nurturing) facilitated by Stockton Borough Council.

Synergy instigated an internal competitive process to identify the member organisation best suited to the delivery of this project; *Tees Valley Housing* were identified as the most suitable provider of this service, which started on 1st April 2014.

The project has been extremely successful, and has evolved significantly since its inception; the project has worked in direct support of more than 35 families, with referrals coming from a range of partners including CAMHS, Social Care, Preventions and FIP. The complexity of cases far exceeds the 'light touch' approach outlined in the original specification, and feedback from partners and service users has been exceptional.

NEET Project

Tees Valley Arts and Know How North East

Synergy was also approached by the local authority to facilitate member organisations to develop innovative and new accredited provision for 16 to 19 year olds who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), as part of a NEET Reduction Project.

Two member organisations, *Tees Valley Arts* and *Know How North East*, were selected to deliver activity as part of this programme, and supported a total of 19 NEET young people to move towards and into a range of positive outcomes including apprenticeships, further education, employment and volunteering using a variety of innovative methods including participatory arts, outdoor experiences and workplace visits.

Community Reintegration and Family Support

In early 2013 Synergy received a £11,400 non-recurrent grant from Stockton Drug and Alcohol Action Team (Pooled Treatment Budget) in order to run a capacity building programme called Community Reintegration and Family Support.

The aim of the project was to provide training to key staff within Synergy member organisations to better equip them to support people with substance misuse issues.

Working closely with Synergy member *A Way Out*, we used the grant to resource three high-quality, innovative training programmes for members of staff from Synergy member organisations.

- Strengthening Families Programme - a nationally and internationally recognised parenting and family strengthening programme for high-risk and regular families.
- Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) - an evidence based intervention for families affected by an adult member who uses alcohol and/or drugs problematically but who refuses to enter treatment.
- Adolescent - Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) – This behavioural intervention programme (based on Community Reinforcement principles) has been found to be one of the most successful and cost effective programmes aimed at reducing substance misuse and supporting recovery amongst youth using drugs/alcohol problematically.

Delivery of this programme is closely aligned to Synergy's delivery of the Troubled Families programme in Stockton, and Troubled Families workers were especially encouraged to access the training on offer. Furthermore, once trained, Synergy members are committed as part of the project to deliver three Strengthening Families programmes, two CRAFT group programmes and 15 1-to-1 interventions, and one A-CRA group programme and at least 12 1-to-1 interventions on an annual basis.

Looking forward...

To 2014-15 and beyond

In order to build on the positive performance of the consortium outlined in this review, we recognise there is a pressing need to access funding and business opportunities that prove viable to the hub organisation and valuable to the wider membership. At the time of writing, resources exist to secure hub activity (including employment of staff and use of office space) until 30th September 2014. As such, fundraising and business development is the number one priority for the six months from 1st April 2014.

Other priorities and plans include:

- expansion and cultivation and of our membership to expand our remit beyond children and young people and health and wellbeing, becoming a holistic VCS consortium for Stockton;
- ongoing liaison with commissioners about Synergy's role in developing innovative third sector service delivery, how we can fully respond to future opportunities, and how we can support the wider objectives of the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group;
- the development and adoption of a comprehensive business plan for 2014-2018, closely aligned with Stockton's Third Sector Strategy;
- the further development, adoption and implementation of robust, membership-approved processes for accessing and distributing consortium funds and managing internal competition;
- a review of the consortium's membership criteria and application process;
- attainment of appropriate quality assurance marks for the Synergy hub and key members, with a view to instil confidence in the consortium's ability to win and deliver public sector contracts;
- brokerage of appropriate tender-readiness support to all Synergy members;
- work to embed a sense of genuine partnership within Synergy, ensuring the consortium works for all members – large and small.

Ageing Better

If we are successful in securing the funding, the Ageing Better project will begin in 2014/15 and run until 2021. This will involve us working with a wide range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, and there will be no inherent favour towards Synergy members. This is a different way of working for Synergy but one in which we feel can add value to our core business while making a significant contribution to the lives of older people in the borough.

Our members

(as of 31st March 2014)

3ScoreYears&10 CIC

A community interest company providing services that safeguard older people and the vulnerable.

www.3scoreyearsand10.co.uk – 01642 796 107

Age UK Teesside

Age UK Teesside is an organization working with and for older people developing and delivering services and activities in consultation with or response to the needs of people aged 50+ living in Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The organisation's aim is to promote wellbeing and independence ensuring later life is a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

www.ageuk.org.uk/teesside - 01642 805 500

ARC – Stockton Arts Centre

ARC is a venue in the centre of Stockton on Tees, offering a full programme of professional, high quality cultural entertainment and extensive programmes of creative activity for people to take part in.

www.arconline.co.uk - 01642 525 199

A Way Out

An outreach and prevention charity, specialised in engaging vulnerable and hard to reach women and young people, using creative and innovative approaches to educate, support and empower them to live safe, healthy and whole lives.

www.awayout.co.uk - 01642 655 071

BCT Aspire

A community interest company providing a range of youth and community activities, volunteer opportunities and social enterprise activity.

www.bctaspire.org.uk - 01642 528 122

The Beat-It Project

A project offering an opportunity for children and young people to learn life skills through music and other performance arts and providing preventative support to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour, NEET, crime and disaffection.

www.thebeat-itproject.co.uk

Big Life Families

Empowering families to achieve their full potential by delivering high quality, accessible services, Big Life runs two children's centres in Stockton-on-Tees.

www.thebiglifegroup.com/big-life-families - 01642 927 274

Bridges Families and Carers Service

Bridges was set up in 2006 by carers whose families had been affected by substance or alcohol misuse. The organisation offers client-centered services with individual support packages that enable individuals and families to cope with the problems that arise from addiction.

www.bridges.cfsites.org - 01642 898 999

The Children's Society Tees Valley

The Children's Society has a 25-year history of providing children and family services in the Tees Valley area, and has a successful track record of working with the most hard-to-reach groups, enabling children, young people and their families to find solutions to barriers that they face.

www.childrenssociety.org.uk - 01642 559 147

CSV's Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP)

RSVP in The Tees Valley is a programme of Community Service Volunteers (CSV), which promotes voluntary and community action nationwide, and was established in the Tees Valley in 1999. RSVP encourages men and women over the age of 50 who have time and energy to spare to become involved as volunteers in their local community. RSVP recognises that older people have a wealth of skills and experience that can be shared with others.

www.csv-rsvpteesvalley.org.uk - 01642 231 560

Cultures CIC

Based in Stockton-On-Tees, Cultures CIC works with individuals and groups from BME, Immigrant and Refugee communities to improve economic and cultural inclusion and to build social cohesion.

www.culturecic.org.uk - 01642 605 838

Eastern Ravens Trust

A local children's charity supporting children and young people from the Stockton area, who are experiencing social isolation.

www.easternravenstrust.co.uk - 01642 678 454

Elm Tree Community Centre

A community centre and charity offering a range of activities and services to the local area.

www.elmtreecommunitycentre.co.uk - 01642 611 333

Five Lamps

Five Lamps aims to 'transform lives, raise aspirations, remove barriers and offer choice to families, business and communities', offering youth services, financial inclusion support, and business advice.

www.fivelamps.org.uk - 01642 608 316

The George Hardwick Foundation

A charity offering a range of support, information and advice to carers in Stockton-on-Tees.

www.georgehardwickfoundation.org - 0845 302 5523

Groundwork North East

Working in partnership with communities and organisations, Groundwork delivers positive sustainable change in places of need across the North East and Cumbria, making real, lasting differences to local people, their neighbourhood and the environment.

www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/northeast - 01388 662 666

Hardwick in Partnership

A local organisation offering a range of services to the people of Hardwick including employability programmes, youth services, and information, advice and guidance.

www.stocktonteesside.co.uk/hardwick-in-partnership - 01642 808414

Home Start Teesside

Home-Start Teesside offers support to parents living in the Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland areas with at least one child under 5 who are dealing with issues such as isolation and loneliness, sickness, disability, mental health, domestic abuse and multiple births.

www.homestart-teesside.org.uk - 01642 501 811

Know How North East / Corner House Youth project

Know How North East (KHNE) is a third sector not-for-profit company that targets its efforts towards the most disadvantaged areas of the borough of Stockton-on-Tees, creating change and opportunity for individuals, families and communities.

www.knowhownortheast.co.uk

www.cornerhouseyouthproject.co.uk – 01642 614 126

Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind

Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind is a registered local charity that provides confidential services for people experiencing emotional or mental health problems and their families.

www.middlesbroughandstocktonmind.org.uk - 01642 645 655

Mindful North East

A local community interest company established by the directors of Alliance Psychological Services Ltd to provide a range of flexible and wraparound support for those individuals and their families with psychological health needs, who do not traditionally meet the threshold of mainstream psychological services.

01642 352747

NEPACS

NEPACS and its forerunners have been working in the north east of England to 'Build bridges for prisoners, their families and the community' for 130 years, with an ongoing commitment to helping people affected by imprisonment.

www.nepacs.co.uk - 0191 375 7278

St Ann's Partnership

A local organisation supporting residents of Portrack, Tilery, Queen's Park, Mount Pleasant and Victoria to improve their neighbourhoods.

Stockton District Advice and Information Service / The Cabin

Part of the Citizens Advice Bureau network that helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice, and by influencing policymakers. The Cabin is a free, confidential and independent advice service for people under 25s.

www.stockton-yas.co.uk - 01642 615834

Stroke Association (Stockton Stroke Family Care Service)

The Stockton Stroke Family Care Service is designed to provide information, emotional support and practical advice to people affected by stroke, their carers and families in the Stockton locality. The service helps reduce the impact of stroke and the burden of caring and provide a smooth transition from hospital to home and assist liaise with statutory providers to reduce crises.

www.stroke.org.uk/support/stockton - 01642 679 018

Tees Valley Arts

An arts development agency based in Middlesbrough in the North East of England, working across the Tees Valley; it is an organisation which champions participation in high quality arts and stimulating creative activities as a tool for improving the quality of life and learning for individuals and communities.

www.teesvalleyarts.org.uk - 01642 264 651

Tees Valley Housing (Supported Housing Team)

A leading provider of quality homes in the social housing sector. The Supported Housing Team provides support services to people who might have difficulty finding and keeping accommodation without support. From 1st April 2014 the organisation is known as **Thirteen Care and Support**.

www.teesvalley.org - 08000 461 600

Tees Valley YMCA

An inclusive and diverse youth organisation that focuses on supporting young people and those in need.

www.teesvalleymca.org.uk - 01642 676 511

Thrive Teesside

An action-research and campaigning organisation in Stockton-on-Tees, working in deprived areas for the well-being of the communities. Thrive undertakes community organising to train local people who are not part of decision-making structures so that they can make a real difference in their communities.

www.thrive-teesside.org.uk 01642 614 126

Unite Mediation

Since its establishment in 1993 as a pilot mediation scheme operating on three estates in Middlesbrough, Unite has grown to become one of the largest schemes in the UK.

www.unite-mediation.org - 01642 311 633

Hub staff

Jon Goodwin – Executive Director



Jon joined Synergy from North Tyneside VODA in August 2013, having worked there for six years delivering a range of partnership projects in support of the local and regional voluntary sector. Prior to that he worked in a range of roles in the voluntary and public sectors, in the North East and Yorkshire. He is responsible for working with the board and membership to set the consortium's strategic direction, managing project delivery, and accessing funding.

Ashley Lane – Administrator



Ashley first came to Stockton to work for Catalyst, in December 2012, working on the development of Synergy in its earliest stages. Originally from Texas, Ashley is now employed by Synergy as our full-time administrator and is responsible for office management, admin and financial support, diary management and project monitoring.

At the time of writing we have two project staff in place, **Trevor Redfern** (Project Coordinator) and **Shirley Gray** (Project Administrator), who are leading on the development of our Ageing Better project.



Thanks also to **Dave King**, who served as Consortium Development Officer until April 2013.

Board members

Board members who served in the period in question are as follows, with the first six individuals acting as company directors and trustees of the charity:

- Amanda Rylander – Three Score Years & 10 (Chair since May 2013)
- Jessie Jacobs – A Way Out (Vice Chair since May 2013)
- Alan Carling – Tees Valley Housing (Treasurer since June 2013)
- Paul Christon – Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind
- Roy Parker – The Beat It Project
- Jacky Duncan – Know How North East / The Corner House Youth Project

- Peter Davies – Independent
- Carolyn Chubb – Independent
- Susan Westerman – Five Lamps (until 31st January 2013, and then co-opted back onto the board from April 2013)
- Janine Browne – Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (until 31st January 2013)
- Paul Burgum – BCT Aspire (until 31st January 2013)

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following organisations, without whom Synergy would not have had the success it has enjoyed in the last 17 months:

- All our member organisations and board members;
- Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees;
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council;
- Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group;
- NHS North of England Commissioning Support Unit;
- Stockton-on-Tees Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Davies Tracey Accountants;
- Unity Trust Bank;
- The Big Lottery Fund;
- Stockton-on-Tees Over-50s Assembly;
- Tees Valley Rural Community Council;
- Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees;
- Neil Coulson Associates;
- The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO);
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO);
- Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE);
- The North East Chamber of Commerce;
- The Federation of Small Businesses;
- People in Partnership Consortium CIC.

Contact us

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